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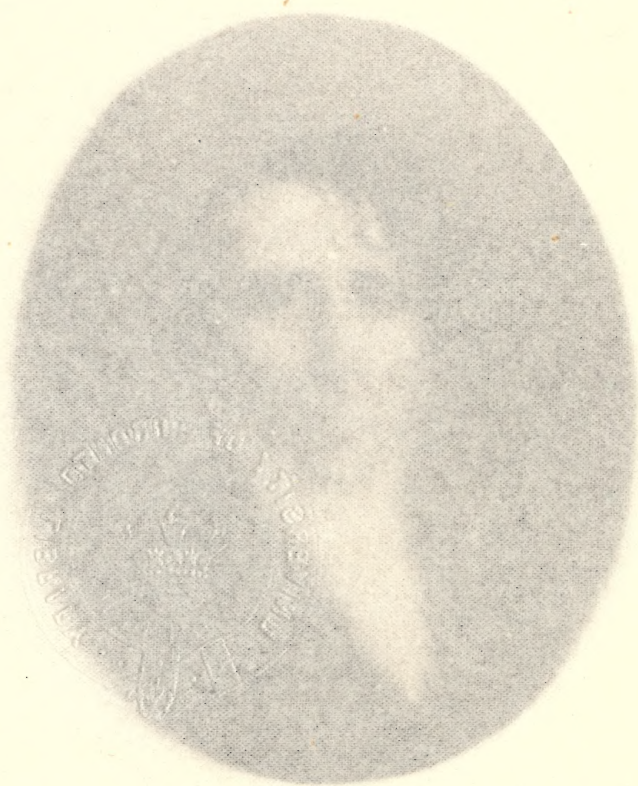












OF PRESENTED BY THE  
AMERICAN  
UNITARIAN  
ASSOCIATION  
Y CHANNING,  
BOSTON, MASS

The Centenary Memorial Edition.

BY HIS NEPHEW.

WILLIAM HENRY CHANNING.

THIRD EDITION.

BOSTON:

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1890.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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A LIFE OF CHANNING, in one volume, appears among the memorials of his hundredth birthday, with the hope of making this great-souled and free-thoughted, this largely-loving and loftily-aspiring prophet of humanity more widely known by fellow-Christians of all communions, and by the people, not of our Republic only, but of every nation throughout Christendom and the world.

For his compeers, friends, and followers are gratefully confident, that among the illustrious lives which have shed truth, love, and quickening influence through the nineteenth century none will be found more bright with promise of a reconciled human race than that of WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

Truly he was the morning-star of a better day for man made one around our globe, by universal equity and brotherly-kindness, by integral culture and refinement, by heroic works of beneficence and beauty, and above all by living communion with the Living God, the Father, Sovereign, and Friend of His whole family on earth and in heaven, united in spirit with His Beloved Son, and growing in His image, to perfection.

W. H. C.





## PREFACE.

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THIS work is an autobiography, in so far as the materials at my command have enabled me to give it that character, and consists of extracts from private papers, sermons, and letters, with such remarks only interwoven as seemed needed for purposes of illustration. Its plan is very simple. After a somewhat full and minute notice of Channing's early years, which will be found to present many interesting facts, and which no one hereafter could so well supply, the selections from his manuscripts have been arranged according to the twofold order of subject and of time. This method was chosen as the one best fitted to convey an adequate impression of the steadiness with which he held all objects of thought before his mind, until his views became consistent and complete; and the growth of his opinions is in this way made clear, as well as the result of his progress. A thorough reader will consider any loss of vivacity in the narrative more than compensated for by the knowledge thus gained of the mental and moral processes of an earnest seeker after truth and right.

It was the original design to present a finished portrait of WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, regarded as a man, a minister of religion, a philosopher, a reformer, and a statesman, — to point out his place among the leading persons of the age, — and, by exhibiting his relations to various parties, to sketch his life and times. Extensive preparations were made accord-

ingly. But experiment at length satisfied me that it was far more difficult than had been supposed to shun the dishonesty of making my honored relative the exponent of my prejudices, without sinking into a tone of non-committal yet more at variance with his character and with the truth. The biographer has therefore preferred silence to partiality or tameness, has limited himself to brief hints and descriptions, has stated for Channing such opinions only as there could be no risk of misapprehending or misrepresenting, and, in a word, has left him to be his own interpreter.

W. H. C.

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# MEMOIR.

## PART FIRST.

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### CHAPTER I. — PARENTAGE AND BIRTH.

1780.

ON the 7th of April, 1780, WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, the third child of WILLIAM CHANNING and LUCY ELLERY, was born in Newport, Rhode Island, U. S. A.

His grandparents, upon the father's and the mother's side alike, were persons of more than common energy, both in character and intelligence.

William Ellery, his mother's father, was a man of singular heartiness, honesty, good sense, and simplicity. "Graduated at Harvard College in 1747, he entered upon business as a merchant in his native town, Newport, which then offered every encouragement to an enterprising man, and was full of attractions to one of his social temper. He married, early in life, Ann, the daughter of Judge Remington, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, an excellent woman, prudent, affable, and hospitable, ever watchful over her children, and careful that her husband should find no place so agreeable to him as his home.

"Mr. Ellery, though urging the young to keep to a single business, to love it, and find distinction in it, and though inclined in his own habits to steady, systematic application, was obliged to give up merchandise in the time of embarrassing revenue acts and non-importation agreements, when there was little or nothing for him to do but to join heart and hand, as he did, with the 'Sons of Liberty,' and in 1770 began the practice of the law. He was, as he says in a letter, a 'stanch friend to political liberty, and that liberty with which the Gospel has made us free.' And his sense of the worth of freedom could be the more relied on, as it did not spring from eager sympathy with the sudden excitements

of the day, but from principles which his experience and reflection had prudently developed and confirmed. It was a deep-seated passion and a moral preference. To forward political liberty was, in his view, to follow every individual to his own heart and home with a blessing. According to his own strong language, he placed his obligations to uphold liberty as high as those which bound him to his wife and children. He had thus far held no political or judicial office; but he was known to the people for his firmness, judgment, and devotion to the public cause; had shown himself a public-hearted man in the first struggles against encroachments upon the rights of the colonies; had been upon important committees, whose business was to procure the repeal of oppressive revenue acts; was acquainted with the active spirits who were preparing themselves and the people for a separation from the mother country; and had inspired a general confidence in his fitness for a high civil trust, let the aspect of affairs be ever so perplexing. Thus approved, he was chosen as delegate of Rhode Island in the memorable Congress of 1776, and with his venerable colleague, Stephen Hopkins, set his name to the Declaration of Independence.

“Mr. Ellery was in Congress from 1776 to 1786, with the exception of the years 1780 and 1782; and while there had universal confidence for his prudent, straightforward, practical view of affairs, and for his consistent, independent, decided conduct. Besides the respect which his abilities and character thus obtained, his social spirit and powers of conversation, his wit, pleasantry, and good-humored satire, which could enliven a party of friends at their lodgings, or sweep away the fallacies and whims of members in a debate, brought him into delightful intimacy with leading men.

“His character bore the marks of habitual self-inspection and self-resistance. Humility was the virtue which he seemed to prize as the most comprehensive and productive. His effort was to bring every thought and desire into subjection before God, and to find security and motive in a fixed sense of his deficiencies and his obligations. This constant study of humility was his light and strength. It cleared and simplified the purpose of human life. It gave him more and more the command of his faculties, and the exercise of his affections, and the power of devoting himself to duty. It showed him on what false principles men are commonly pronounced great, and how monstrous are arrogance and oppression in a mortal. But this moral warfare never threw an air of constraint or austerity upon his intercourse with others. It seemed as if his spirits were kept elastic by his constant guard over them. His very kindness



and gentleness had none of the inertness of mere good temper, but were animated by an active, cherished principle of love, which discriminated its objects and was all alive for the happiness of another.

“In the pursuit of truth, he seemed more anxious for the certainty than the amount and variety of results. He was not fond of indulging in conjectures, that he might fill the void where he had in vain looked for satisfying truth; nor was he unhappy because of the uncertainties which cannot be cleared up in an imperfect state of being. His feelings and wishes, and every extraneous or accidental circumstance, were as if they did not exist, in his sober-minded inquiry. Or rather, the very influences that are most apt to mislead did but sound the alarm to him to be single-hearted, and made his power of discerning the keener. He had the plainest common-sense, and the most prudent judgment in common affairs; and not so much from having lived long in the world, as from his right temper of mind, and his habit of going far into the reason of things. This honesty or fairness of mind was his great distinction, and an explanation of his character. It was a proof of his moral and intellectual vigor. It was a religious principle. It ran through all his studies and experience, restraining him from injustice, and compelling him to condemn injustice; opening the way through ancient errors of whatever kind, and for the admission of light from whatever quarter; and making it absolutely impossible that he should be a partisan or idolater in anything.

“His kindness and warmth of affection were especially manifest in his intercourse with the young. A plain man, in years, living in retirement, and obtruding his opinions upon no one, he drew them to him as if he were their dependence; and they felt that they owed to him, not only some of their best-remembered seasons of pleasure, but in no small degree the direction and coloring of their thoughts. When he saw anything to blame, he spoke plainly and earnestly, and suffered no weakness of affection to conceal or impair the force of what he thought it his duty to say. If they neglected his admonitions and disappointed his expectations, his regret was unmingled with selfishness, and his affection unabated. They might need it the more.”<sup>1</sup>

After leaving Congress, Mr. Ellery was for many years collector of the customs in Newport, where he lived to the age of ninety-three, beloved by a large circle of relatives and friends, and affectionately honored by his fellow-citizens. He was remarkable, to

<sup>1</sup> Life of William Ellery. By Edward Tyrrel Channing. Sparks's American Biography, Vol. VI., 1st Series.

the very close of his long life, for youthfulness of feeling, brightness of mind, and ready interest in nature, people, literature, events.

This sketch of the grandfather will be found to illustrate in no unimportant degree both the character and intellect of his distinguished grandson; for William but recorded his own experience, when, after he had reached mature life, he wrote to Mr. Ellery: "You have hardly a grandchild who cannot trace back some of his sentiments and principles to your instructive and condescending conversation."

John Channing, William's grandfather on the paternal side, was a respectable, and, till towards the close of life, a prosperous merchant of Newport. He was son of John Channing, of Dorsetshire, England, — the first of the name who came to America, — and of Mary Antram, who arrived in Boston in 1712, and were soon after married. The wife of John Channing, Jr. was Mary Chaloner (the widow of Dr. James Robinson, physician), who was long remembered in Newport for her energy of character and dignity of manner. She was a high-spirited and ardent, yet religious and conscientious woman, and remarkable for activity and method.

William Channing, their second son, was born in Newport, June 11, 1751, and educated at Nassau Hall, Princeton College, New Jersey, where he graduated in 1769. He read law with Oliver Arnold, at Providence; in 1771, began the practice of his profession at Newport; in 1773, married Lucy Ellery, the daughter of William Ellery; in 1777, became attorney-general of his native State, and upon the adoption of the Federal Constitution, without any solicitation on his part, was appointed to the office of district attorney for the district of Rhode Island.

Hon. Asher Robbins, late member of the Senate of the United States from Rhode Island, writes of him thus: —

"Mr. Channing was very well read in the law, especially in the forms of pleading; law cases were his favorite reading, even for amusement. He had a large library, and one very well selected.

"He interested himself much in State politics, and his office was the central point of rendezvous, where the leading men congregated for their consultations.

"He was very popular in the State, was attorney-general and district attorney at the same time, and held both offices at the time of his death.

"His manner of speaking at the bar was rapid, vehement, and impressive; never studied, nor exactly methodical in his pleadings;

but he always came well prepared as to matter and authority. He had an extensive practice, attended all the courts regularly, and was considered, for several years before his death, as the leading counsel of the State.

"In person, he was of the middle stature, well made, erect, and of an open countenance; he was lively and pleasant in his conversation, and much disposed to social intercourse; he was hospitable and kind-hearted. His agreeable manner was one great source of his general popularity.

"His temper was remarkably good, as were his manners, mild, liberal, generous; his habits were also correct, temperate, industrious, mindful and observant of all the duties and proprieties of life."

In addition, his father-in-law, Mr. Ellery, says of him:—

"He repeatedly served as a deputy for his native town; and such was his regard for its interests, that he did not decline that service, until, by the extensiveness of his practice, and the increase of his family, he was compelled to give to them his whole attention.

"He early became the head of a family. He married in the twenty-third year of his age, and performed the offices and charities of a husband and father with strict, constant, and tender attention, and was beloved and respected.

"The law of kindness and benevolence was in his heart and on his tongue. The persons employed by him as domestics, and in other services, he treated with great humanity, and rewarded with a liberal punctuality. He was an obedient and respectful son, and a most affectionate brother and friend. To the poor he was compassionate. The needy never went away from his house empty. His table and his purse were always open to their wants, and his munificence was ever accompanied with a sweetness in the manner, which doubled the obligations of gratitude.

"His religious sentiments were liberal. He was particularly attached to the Congregational denomination of Christians, but he treated all good men of all denominations with kindness and respect. He generously contributed to the support of Christian worship in the society to which he belonged, and countenanced and encouraged it by a constant and reverential attendance, and the ministers of religion experienced his hospitality.

"His political sentiments were displayed in a warm attachment to the rights of mankind, chastened by a love of peace and order.

"His countenance and deportment expressed the amiableness



and benevolence of his disposition, and his morals corresponded with his manners. He was temperate and honest; he was courteous and respectful. As he keenly felt the distresses of mankind, so was he as strongly disposed to relieve their sufferings. He looked down with such pity on the poor and afflicted as encouraged them to look up to him for succor as to a brother."

These reminiscences of the father are confirmed and completed by the following beautiful notice, written in 1841, by his son William: <sup>1</sup> —

"BOSTON, December 18, 1841.

"My recollections of my father are imperfect, as he died when I was thirteen years of age, and I had been sent from home before that event. But the many testimonies which I have received to his eminence as a lawyer, as well as to his private virtues, make me desirous that there should be some memorial of him.

"My father retained much attachment to Princeton College, where he was educated, so that he thought of sending me there. He was the classmate and friend of Samuel S. Smith, afterwards distinguished as a theologian, and as the president of that institution. In the last part of his collegiate days he enjoyed the instructions of the celebrated Dr. Witherspoon.

"His early marriage and the rapid increase of his family obliged him to confine himself rigidly to his profession. He was too busy to give much time to general reading, or even to his family. Still, I have distinct impressions of his excellence in his social relations. He was the delight of the circle in which he moved. His mother, brothers, and sisters leaned on him as on no other. I well remember the benignity of his countenance and voice. At the same time he was a strict disciplinarian at home, and, according to the mistaken notions of that time, kept me at too great a distance from him. In truth, the prevalent notions of education were much more imperfect than in our day.

"I often went into courts, but was too young to understand my father's merits in the profession; yet I had always heard of him as standing at its head. My brother says that Judge Dawes used to speak of his style and manner as 'mellifluous;' but at times he was vehement, for I well recollect that I left the court-house in fear, at hearing him indignantly reply to what seemed to him unworthy language in the opposite counsel.

"His parents were religious, and the impressions made on his young mind were never lost. He was the main pillar of the

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of the Rhode Island Bar. By Wilkins Updike, Esq.

religious society to which he belonged. The house of worship had suffered much from the occupation of Newport by the British army, so as to be unfit for use; and I recollect few things in my childhood more distinctly than his zeal in restoring it to its destination, and in settling a minister. I cannot doubt that his religious character received important aid from the ministry and friendship of Dr. Stiles, who was as eminent for piety as learning, and under whose teachings he grew up. He had a deep, I may say peculiar, abhorrence of the vice of profaneness; and such was his influence, that his large family of sons escaped this taint to a remarkable degree, though brought up in the midst of it. I recollect, with gratitude, the strong impression which he made on my own mind. I owed it to him, that, though living in the atmosphere of this vice, no profane word ever passed my lips.

“On one subject I think of his state of mind with sorrow. His father, like most respectable merchants of that place, possessed slaves imported from Africa. They were the domestics of the family; and my father had no sensibility to the evil. I remember, however, with pleasure, the affectionate relation which subsisted between him and the Africans (most of them aged) who continued to live with my grandfather. These were liberated after the Revolution; but nothing could remove them from their old home, where they rather ruled than served. One of the females used to speak of herself as the daughter of an African prince; and she certainly had much of the bearing of royalty. The dignity of her aspect and manner bespoke an uncommon woman. She was called Duchess, probably on account of the rank she had held in her own country. I knew her only after she was free, and had an establishment of her own. Now and then she invited all the children of the various families with which she was connected to a party, and we were liberally feasted under her hospitable roof. My father won the hearts of all his domestics. One of the sincerest mourners, at his death, was an excellent woman who had long lived with us, and whom he honored for her piety.

“I recollect, distinctly, the great interest he took in the political questions which agitated the country. Though but eight or nine years of age, I was present when the Rhode Island Convention adopted the Federal Constitution; and the enthusiasm of that moment I can never forget. My father entered with his whole heart into that unbounded exultation. He was one of the most devoted members of the Federal party. At the beginning of the French Revolution he shared in the universal hope and joy which it inspired; but I well recollect the sadness with which he talked to



us, one Sunday afternoon, of the execution of Louis the Sixteenth ; and from that moment his hopes died.

“ You speak of the testimony borne to him by the late Elisha R. Potter, Esq. My father was among the first to discover the abilities of that remarkable man, and I remember the kindness with which he used to receive him. His spirit was, in truth, the kindest. He was ever ready to see and appreciate superior talents, and to attach himself to worth. His friendship seemed to me singularly strong for a man so immersed in business. Among his friends were George Champlin, Esq., a politician of singular capacity, and who was said to have ruled the State for years without forfeiting his integrity ; Dr. Isaac Senter, a physician of extensive practice, who was thought to unite with great experience a rare genius in his profession, and whose commanding figure rises before me, at the distance of forty-five years, as a specimen of manly beauty worthy the chisel of a Grecian sculptor ; and the Rev. Dr. Hitchcock, of Providence, a man of great sweetness of temper, and who deserves the grateful remembrance of that city for his zealous efforts in the cause of public education. My father took a great pleasure in the society of ministers, and always welcomed them to his hospitable dwelling.

“ I remember his tastes with pleasure. He had two gardens, one of them quite large, and as he sought to have everything which he cultivated of the best kind, our table, otherwise simple, was, in this respect, luxurious. He was not satisfied with what contented his neighbors, but introduced new varieties of vegetables into the town. He also took great interest in sacred music. On Sunday evening, the choir of the congregation, which included most of the younger members, and other amateurs, met in his office for practice in singing. The apartment, somewhat spacious, was filled ; and the animation of the meeting, to which his zeal contributed not a little, made the occasion one of my weekly pleasures.

“ As far as I can trust my recollections of my father’s person, it must have been very prepossessing ; but to me his appearance, at the time, was more venerable than beautiful. His head was bald, and his cocked hat, and the other parts of his dress, which, according to the fashions of the day, differed much from the costume of the young, made him seem from the first an old man.

“ He prospered in life, but without being able to leave a competence to his large family. His labors were great, but I have no recollection of seeing him depressed. I should place him among the happy. He was taken away in the midst of usefulness and hope. The disease of which he died was not understood. I re-

member that he used to complain of feelings which we now should consider as dyspepsia ; but that disease was little thought of then, and the name never heard.

“ These are very scanty reminiscences ; but as I hardly saw my father after reaching my twelfth year, and as nearly fifty years have passed since that time, it is not to be wondered at that I can recall no more of his calm, uniform life. The career of a professional man, occupied with the support of a large family, offers no great events.

“ I little thought, when I began, of writing so much ; but the pleasure which all men take in the virtues of parents has led me on insensibly.

“ My father died before I could requite him for his toils for my support and his interest in my moral well-being ; and I feel as if, in this present instance, I was discharging some part, though a very small one, of my great debt. I owed him much, and it is not my smallest obligation that his character enables me to join affectionate esteem and reverence with my instinctive gratitude.

“ Very truly yours, W. E. CHANNING.”

Lucy Ellery, William's mother, resembled her father in energy, judgment, practical skill, and integrity. But she added to these traits a tenderness of sensibility and a deep enthusiasm, which threw a charm of romance over her conduct and conversation. She was small in person, but erect in bearing and elastic in movement ; and strongly marked features, with a singularly bright and penetrating eye, gave her an air of self-reliance and command. Her manner was generally benignant, often tenderly affectionate, and marked by the dignified courtesy of the old school ; but if pretension and fraud, in any of their manifold disguises, crossed her path, she became chillingly reserved and blunt to the verge of severity. Her feelings were quick, her humor was lively, and so did she clothe sagacious thoughts in quaint dialect, that she was as entertaining a companion as she was a wise counsellor. The whole tone of her mind and temper was original ; blending, in a rare union, shrewdness and sympathy, caution and fresh impulse, devoted generosity and strict conscience, stern straightforwardness and cordial love. In a word, there was a rough nobleness in her ways, which irresistibly won affection and respect, and made her influence powerful for good on all within her sphere. The following sketch, by her son William, may best introduce her.

“ The most remarkable trait in my mother's character was the rectitude and simplicity of her mind. Perhaps I have never known

her equal in this respect. She was true in thought, word, and life. She had the firmness to see the truth, to speak it, to act upon it. She was direct in judgment and conversation, and in my long intercourse with her I cannot recall one word or action betraying the slightest insincerity. She had keen insight into character. She was not to be imposed upon by others, and, what is rarer, she practised no imposition on her own mind. She saw things, persons, events, as they were, and spoke of them by their right names. Her partialities did not blind her, even to her children. Her love was without illusion. She recognized unerringly, and with delight, fairness, honesty, genuine uprightness, and shrunk as by instinct from everything specious, the factitious in character, and plausible manners."

Born of parents thus rich in natural gifts, and well trained, William inherited a physical organization at once delicate and vigorous, and tendencies of heart and mind in which the virtues of both were most happily balanced. He is remembered as having been an infant of rare loveliness, and was from the first an idol. Such prophetic affection tends naturally to bring the fulfilment of its hopes; and certainly, in the present instance, the expectant trust of the mother was an exhaustless incentive to the son. She lived for more than fifty years after his birth, and their relation throughout this long, and for the most part unbroken, period of intercourse was as beautiful as it was rich in mutual blessing.

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## CHAPTER II. — BOYHOOD.

ÆT. 1-14. 1780-1794.

THE earliest description given of William is from an aged relative, who says: "I remember him as a boy three or four years old, with brilliant eyes, glowing cheeks, and light-brown hair falling in curls upon his shoulders, dressed in a green velvet jacket, with ruffled collar and white under-clothes, standing by his mother's side on the seat of the pew, and looking round upon the congregation. I thought him the most splendid child I ever saw." Allowance must of course be made, in our estimate of such a sketch, for any reflected brightness which success in after life may have thrown upon the memory. But all testimony confirms this impression of the beaming beauty of William's childhood; and to those

who have associations only with the wasted form, thin features, and sunken eyes of the preacher, whose spirit seemed about to cast aside the body, this picture of the blooming boy will not be without the charm, at least, of contrast.

Owing to his mother's poor state of health, the children were early placed at school, and William was sent when yet so young that he was often carried in the arms of a colored man. One of his first recollections was of being taken to the school-room one morning after the good mistress had died. The stillness which prevailed in place of the usual bustle, the slow steps, the hushed voices, and the sight of the dead body, left a feeling of awe so strong that he vividly recalled the scene in the very last year of his life.

As he grew older, William was advanced to the boarding and day school of Mr. Rogers, which was considered the best in the town, and indeed had so high a reputation, that boys from a distance, especially from the South, were sent to his charge. It was the habit of that time to use flogging as the common penalty, and no master would then have responded, as all good ones must now do, to the words of Vogel, — "When we teachers become fully competent to our work, the necessity of corporeal punishment will cease altogether."<sup>1</sup> This is mentioned, because it is certain that what he then experienced outraged his sensitive honor, and served to arouse the feeling of indignation against any form of violence used towards children, which grew so strong in him in later years. He would often tell an anecdote of a little boy in school trying to shield with his arms a larger one, whom the master was about to whip. The contrast of the great heart with the small physical power, the noble position of the young remonstrant against tyranny, produced an indelible impression upon his childish imagination, and made the severity of the teacher and the quarrelling of the children detestable and hideous. He had through life an utter contempt and horror for every arbitrary infliction of bodily pain; and once, when conversing with a person who advocated the use of the lash in the army, navy, and prisons, broke forth with, "What! strike a *man*!" with such a thrilling tone, that it completely overwhelmed his hearer, and awakened in him an entirely new sense of the dignity of a human being.

In connection with this degradation of boys by whipping, he sometimes remarked that his first feeling of the sacredness of woman was called out by observing that the delicate hands of the girls at school were never marked by the ferule. But, indeed, this

<sup>1</sup> Hon. H. Mann's Seventh Report, as Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education.



early sentiment of reverence for women was probably owing to his lively sensibility to female loveliness. For once, while gazing on his daughter, as she danced playfully round him, he said, with a tone of deep tenderness: "She brings so to mind the days when her mother, then a gay little girl, used with her companions to creep from the school-room unnoticed by the master, and I, looking out of the window, would watch her as she skipped down the street, and with boastful gesture mocked the boys who could not follow. She seemed, with her hair floating on her shoulders, as she lightly moved, so very beautiful. I have a clearer notion of the bliss of a seraph in heaven now than I had then, of the joyous spirit which buoyed up that form."

As a pupil, it is said that William was patient and diligent, but not remarkable for quickness of perception. He rather examined carefully the subject offered to his attention, listening to his teacher, till satisfied that he thoroughly understood his meaning, than comprehended it at once by rapid insight. Considerateness, reflection, thoroughness, rather than brilliancy, originality, or force, seem to have been his mental manifestations at school. But so much depends upon the skill of the teacher, upon penetration to detect, and readiness of sympathy to foster, the peculiar genius of a child, that but small reliance can be placed upon such indications as he then gave of his intellectual biases. All that is actually known is, that he gained the respect of his instructors, held a high rank among his fellows, and awakened the warm hopes of his friends; for, in a letter written towards the close of his school days, his father, using the stately style of expressing affection then common, says to him: "We expect much from our son William, and flatter ourselves that we shall not be disappointed."

Of the more important education which William received from the influences of home and of society, he has himself given a graphic, though slight sketch, in the letter descriptive of his father. But it may be well to dwell on these influences for a moment, as they did much to give direction to his moral energies. His father's dignified reserve towards his children has been noticed with regret by the son; but still the pervading sweetness of his manner must have captivated them, and won their confidence, for, by universal report, his presence was like a sunbeam, — so did cheerfulness, serenity, good-humor, pleasantry, kind regard for others' rights and feelings, and assiduity to please, surround him with an atmosphere of love. And though little under the direct influence of his father's character, William's principles were yet



permanently fashioned by his example. From him, and from his grandfather, and their conversations on public questions, at the critical period when our nation was settling into order after the upheaval of the Revolution, and when Europe was shaken from end to end by the first waves of the grand social earthquake, he doubtless derived that spirit of patriotism and interest in political movements by which he was afterwards characterized. His father, as a leading lawyer, and an earnest supporter of the Federal party, necessarily received at his house various eminent men who visited Newport. Washington dined there when on his Northern tour; and it can be readily understood how much a boy's enthusiasm, already fervent from hearing him always spoken of in terms of honor, was heightened by thus seeing the Father of the Nation face to face. Jay, too, and other men remarkable for political, professional, and literary talent, were there, waking by their presence generous ambition. And by Dr. Stiles, once pastor in Newport, and afterwards President of Yale College, William was so moved, that late in life he used in relation to him this strong language: "To the influence of this distinguished man in the circle in which I was brought up, I may owe in part the indignation which I feel towards every invasion of human rights. In my earliest years I regarded no human being with equal reverence. I have his form before me at this moment almost as distinctly as if I had seen him yesterday, so strong is the impression made on a child through the moral affections."<sup>1</sup>

While thus in an atmosphere of freedom, tempered by respect for order, the traits were developed which made him in manhood a patriot and philanthropist; yet deeper influences were unfolding William's spiritual affections. He seems from the first to have shown a bent towards the pursuit that occupied his mature years, and early earned the title of "Little Minister." When yet very small, he was wont to arrange a room with seats and desk, and to summon the family, with blows upon the warming-pan by way of a bell, to a religious meeting, where he preached with much seriousness and energy. At other times, he would assemble his playmates for a similar purpose upon the steps of the door. This development of religious sensibility may have been owing in a measure to the influence of an aunt of his father's, who was an invalid, and a woman of much piety and sweetness, to whose room the nephews and nieces went on a Sunday afternoon to read in the Bible or some good book, repeat hymns, and join in a simple

<sup>1</sup> Discourse at the Dedication of the Unitarian Congregational Church, Newport, 1836. Works, Vol. IV. p. 341. One Volume Edition, p. 423.

prayer. At home, too, his mother was accustomed to call the children together in the best parlor, which was open only once a week, or on great occasions, and to read with them from the Scriptures. He was influenced, too, not a little by a respected confidential servant, Rachel De Gilder, a woman of masculine energy, kind, though firm, and of strong religious principle, who exerted a sway over the children second only to their mother's, and to whom William felt a gratitude so warm that he befriended her through a long life. Rachel was a Baptist, converted and instructed by Mr. Eddy, of Newport, who was afterward known to have been a Unitarian. Her views were uncommonly cheerful; and it would be interesting to learn how far suggestive words, dropped by her in conversation, became germs in the boy's receptive heart, which ripened into the theology of his manhood.

Many elevating influences, indeed, were around him, to which he has thus borne grateful testimony : —

“I can well remember how the name of Dr. Stiles was cherished among his parishioners, after years of separation. His visit to this place was to many a festival. When little more than a child, I was present at some of his private meetings with the more religious part of his former congregation, and I recollect how I was moved by the tears and expressive looks with which his affectionate exhortations were received. In his faith, he was what was called a moderate Calvinist; but his heart was of no sect. He carried into his religion the spirit of liberty, which then stirred the whole country. Intolerance, church tyranny, in all its forms, he abhorred. He respected the right of private judgment, where others would have thought themselves authorized to restrain it. A young man, to whom he had been as a father, one day communicated to him doubts concerning the Trinity. He expressed his sorrow, but mildly, and with undiminished affection, told him to go to the Scriptures, and to seek his faith there and only there. His friendships were confined to no parties. He desired to heal the wounds of the divided church of Christ, not by a common creed, but by the spirit of love. He wished to break every yoke, civil and ecclesiastical.”

Of Dr. Hopkins, also, whom he used to hear preach, as well as often to meet at his father's table, he has left recollections full of affectionate respect. It was from him that he first gained his convictions of the iniquity of slavery; for this was a subject on which Dr. Hopkins, without heeding the strong prejudices and passions enlisted on the side of wrong, bore faithful testimony from the press

and the pulpit, while at the same time he labored for the education of the colored people with energy and success.

“My recollections of Dr. Hopkins,” he writes, “go back to my earliest years. As the Second Congregational Church was closed in my childhood, in consequence of Dr. Stiles’s removal to New Haven, my father was accustomed to attend on the ministry of Dr. Hopkins. Perhaps he was the first minister I heard, but I heard him with no profit. His manner, which was singularly unattractive, could not win a child’s attention; and the circumstances attending the service were repulsive. The church had been much injured by the British during their occupation of the town, and the congregation were too poor to repair it. It had a desolate look, and in winter the rattling of the windows made an impression which time has not worn out. It was literally ‘as cold as a barn,’ and some of the most painful sensations of my childhood were experienced in that comfortless building. As I grew up, I was accustomed to attend worship in our own church, where Dr. Patten was settled, so that for years I knew little of Dr. Hopkins. My first impressions were not very favorable. I think it probable that his strong reprobation of the slave-trade excited ill-will in the place, and I can distinctly recollect that the prevalence of terror in his preaching was a very common subject of remark, and gave rise to ludicrous stories among the boys.”<sup>1</sup>

It was at this period, too, that he received lessons, never to be forgotten, on the virtue of temperance, from a Baptist minister, called Father Thurston. This worthy man gave striking evidence of his zeal for reforming the vice of drunkenness, at a time when all classes of society there, as elsewhere, were debased by it, and when the citizens of Newport were largely engaged in the manufacture and traffic in ardent spirits. He was very poor, and eked out a scanty support, in addition to a small ministerial salary, by working during the week as a cooper. But though hogsheads and barrels were the articles most in demand for the West India trade, the old gentleman would make nothing but pails.

A significant anecdote illustrating the religious impressions made upon his mind in childhood is thus related by himself. His father, with the view of giving him a drive, took William in his chaise one day, as he was going to hear a famous preacher in the neighborhood. Impressed with the notion that he might learn glad tidings from the unseen world, he listened attentively to the sermon. With glowing rhetoric, the lost state of man was described, his abandonment to

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. IV. p. 341. One Volume Edition, p. 423.



evil, helplessness, dependence upon sovereign grace, and the need of earnest prayer as the condition of receiving divine aid. In the view of the speaker, a curse seemed to rest upon the earth, and darkness and horror to veil the face of nature. William, for his part, supposed that henceforth those who believed would abandon all other things to seek this salvation, and that amusement and earthly business would no longer occupy a moment. The service over, they went out of the church, and his father, in answer to the remark of some person, said, with a decisive tone: "Sound doctrine, Sir." "It is all *true* then," was the boy's inward reflection. A heavy weight fell on his heart. He wanted to speak to his father; he expected his father would speak to him in relation to this tremendous crisis of things. They entered the chaise and drove along, but, absorbed in awful thoughts, he could not raise his voice. At length they reached home; but instead of calling the family together, and telling them of the appalling intelligence which the preacher had given, his father quietly read a newspaper. All things went on as usual. At first, he was surprised; but not being given to talking, he asked no explanations. Soon, however, the question rose,—"Could what he had heard be true? No! his father did not believe it; people did not believe it! It was *not* true!" He felt that he had been trifled with; that the preacher had deceived him; and from that time he became inclined to distrust everything oratorical, and to measure exactly the meaning of words; he had received a profound lesson on the worth of sincerity.

External aids were useful, however, in unfolding William's religious nature, only because this was so rich in high, generous, conscientious feeling. He was remarkable, from the first, for purity and self-command, and for an air of dignity, which abashed the frivolousness of rude companions, and guarded him from the familiarities of less delicate spirits. And it was well that conscience was thus early quickened, and that this mantle of modesty was wrapped about him; for, to use his own words, there was then "a corruption of morals among those of my own age, which made boyhood a critical and perilous season."

In disposition, William was for the most part grave and reflective. He was fond of lonely rambles on the beach; liked to go apart into some beautiful scene, with no other playmate than his kite, which he delighted in flying; indulged in reverie and contemplation, and according to his own statement owed the tone of his character more to the influences of solitary thought than of companionship. Indeed, he often said that he understood the happiness of childhood rather from observation than experience, that his early life was sad,

that conscious want of virtue and knowledge then depressed him, that friendship seemed tame and cold, that life looked desolate, and that every year had been brighter to him than the last.

Among his playmates he seems to have been always noted for a certain greatness of character. They called him "Peacemaker" and "Little King Pepin." He is described as having been small and delicate, yet muscular and active, with a very erect person, quick movement, a countenance that, while sedate, was cheerful, and a singularly sweet smile, which he never lost through life. When with companions, he was exuberant in spirits, overflowing with energy, ready to join heartily in all amusements, but never boisterous. He was much beloved by the children of the school and neighborhood, though even then acting as an exhorter; for he used to rebuke among them all profaneness or obscenity; but this was done with a gentle tone, that manifested rather sorrow than anger, and was well received. His character was thus early marked by mingled strength and sweetness, though by some accounts it would appear that he was by no means free from irritability. He loved power, too; and such was his sway, among even the quarrelsome, that when his voice was heard, persuading them to order, he was readily obeyed. Sufficient fire, however, was latent under his mildness to give him energy. On one occasion he flogged a boy larger than himself, who had imposed, as he thought, upon one weaker. And on another, when the pupils of Mr. Rogers's school had collected in expectation of an attack from the boys of a different part of the town, William urged them to go and meet the others and settle the matter at once; he disapproved of delay and mere talking. He was a remarkable wrestler also, excelled in pitching the quoit, liked adventurous sports, was fond of climbing to the masthead of vessels at the wharf, and once, when sliding rapidly down a stay, narrowly escaped being dashed on deck, the swift descent tearing the skin from his hands. Through life, indeed, he had unflinching physical as well as moral courage, and seemed unconscious of fear. He was officer, too, it seems, in a company of boys that marched to salute Count Rochambeau when he was on a visit at Newport, upon which occasion the young commander made an address, and marshalled his troop, with a spirit that won much admiration.

If these trifling mementos indicate a generous and high-spirited character, there are others which illustrate his thoughtfulness and disinterestedness. Among them, one may be worth noting, because it proves that he had instinctively adopted in early years the rule which strictly governed his manhood, of "letting not his left

hand know what his right hand did." A man sick and in distress begged one day at the door. William observed him, but was silent, and gave nothing at the time. When the beggar had gone, however, he was seen to follow him out, and to put into his hand some pieces of money, which must have been all that he had. It is remembered, too, that he used to visit a friendless and desolate old man in the neighborhood, carrying with him such comforts as he could command; and interest generally in the poor, deference for the aged, and considerate regard for the feelings and rights of domestics in the family, gained for him the warm affection due to the liberal and loving.

A gentle and kind disposition manifested itself also in his treatment of animals, as, in a letter written soon after leaving college, he thus himself declares:—

"Thanks that I can say I have never killed a bird. I would not crush the meanest insect which crawls upon the ground. They have the same right to life that I have, they received it from the same Father, and I will not mar the works of God by wanton cruelty.

"I can remember an incident in my childhood, which has given a turn to my whole life and character. I found a nest of birds in my father's field, which held four young ones. They had no down when I first discovered them. They opened their little mouths as if they were hungry, and I gave them some crumbs which were in my pocket. Every day I returned to feed them. As soon as school was done, I would run home for some bread, and sit by the nest to see them eat, for an hour at a time. They were now feathered, and almost ready to fly. When I came one morning, I found them all cut up into quarters. The grass round the nest was red with blood. Their little limbs were raw and bloody. The mother was on a tree, and the father on the wall, mourning for their young. I cried, myself, for I was a child. I thought, too, that the parents looked on me as the author of their miseries, and this made me still more unhappy. I wanted to undeceive them. I wanted to sympathize with and comfort them. When I left the field, they followed me with their eyes and with mournful reproaches. I was too young and too sincere in my grief to make any apostrophes. But I can never forget my feelings. The impression will never be worn away, nor can I ever cease to abhor every species of inhumanity towards inferior animals."

This sketch of William's boyhood cannot be more fitly closed than with the following letter from his friend in youth, and friend till death, our poet-painter, Washington Allston.



“I know not that I could better describe him than as an *open, brave, and generous boy*. The characters of boys are, I believe, almost always truly estimated by their companions, — at least morally, though perhaps seldom intellectually; and these are generally assigned to the several classes of the open or the cunning, the generous or the mean, the brave or the cowardly. And I well remember, though he was several months my junior (a matter of some importance among children), that I always looked up to him even in boyhood with respect; nor can I recall a single circumstance that ever weakened that feeling. In our games, he was never known to take any undue advantage, but would give way at once, where there was the least doubt on the point at issue. And though he was but scantily provided with pocket-money his little chance supplies seemed, in the school-boy phrase, always to ‘burn in his pocket’; he could neither keep it there, nor ever expend it wholly on himself. On one occasion, when quite a little boy, he had a present from a relative of a dollar. Such an excess of wealth was never before in his possession; and I can now bring before me the very expression of glee with which he came among us, to disencumber himself of the load. This is the only incident that I can now recall, and this must have been full fifty years ago. He had the same large heart when a boy, that animated him to the last. His intellectual endowments are known to the world; but only his early companions, who have survived him, can bear witness to the rare uniformity of his moral worth; man and boy, he was, in their true sense, high-minded and noble-hearted.”

At the age of twelve, William was sent to New London, to prepare for college, under the care of his uncle, the Rev. Henry Channing. And it was while he was residing there, that, on the 21st of September, 1793, his father died. He was sent for to come home; and an aged friend of the family still describes the deep and general sympathy called out by the appearance of the funeral procession, when Francis, the eldest son, then in college, and William, now a boy of thirteen years, with their widowed mother and the younger children, followed the coffin of their beloved and universally honored parent through the streets of Newport.

This death made a momentous change in the condition of the family, and threw a heavy load of responsibility on the elder sons; for the father, though most industrious in his profession, and engaged in large business, had been thus far able to lay up but a small property; and the mother, though wise and energetic, found herself oppressed with a weight of care in the charge of nine children.

It is easy to see that the effect of such a loss upon a boy full of sensibility, conscientious and resolute, like William, must have been to stimulate him to the exercise of every power, and to the most rapid preparation for a time when he might maintain himself and assist his family. From easy independence and cheering worldly prospects, he and his had suddenly become poor; and at the earliest moment it was necessary that he should free his mother from the burden of his support. More than that, the head of the house was taken; and he and his elder brother must now become their mother's advisers, and guardians of those younger. The character of independent energy, and thoughtful oversight for every member of his family, thus early awakened, grew stronger through life. Doubtless, however, a shade of premature seriousness was given to his temper. The effect of this bereavement is shown by an extract from a letter of his grandfather Ellery, who says:—

“Your letters have afforded me great delight, for they have all discovered that affectionate regard for your mother, your brothers and sisters, and your other relatives, which naturally flows from a feeling and ingenuous mind, and indicates an amiable disposition.”

His brother, too, writes:—

“The goodness of heart which you possess will, I doubt not, ever keep you desirous of liberating our mother from her cares. Pass with her all the moments you can steal from healthful recreations and necessary studies, and let the kind attentions of filial affection be a return for the unrequitable tenderness which we, her beloved children, have received. Your brothers and sisters esteem you for your friendly disposition. Yes, William, you are happy in possessing the good-will of all.”

At New London he remained a year and more; and his uncle, writing to him soon after he entered college, thus describes the impression which his character and conduct had left:—

“It gave me sensible pleasure to find you, my dear nephew, retaining the same animated sensibility which rendered you capable of receiving and communicating happiness, and secured you cordial welcome while resident in my family. Your aunt loves you tenderly, and often expresses her feelings while recounting your affectionate respect and attention. Never did you excite one painful emotion in our breasts, but always with you our hearts were made glad. We never can forget such a nephew, or, rather, such a son.”

That he was earnest and successful in his studies also appears by

the following extract from another letter of his uncle, who was his instructor :—

“ Without flattery, I can only say that your progress was more the result of your assiduity than of my attention.

“ I am pleased with your observations upon the expectations of your friends, and your determination to endeavor to realize them. We know that your situation and your genius justify us in forming the most flattering ideas of the future eminence of our nephew. . . . Permit me to indulge the hope that you will continue to possess and cherish that modesty and deference to superiors which has hitherto been a distinguishing trait in your character.”

These were strong words of praise to draw from one singularly exacting of courteous respect, and who, though kind in heart, was severely precise in manners. To this uncle he owed much in every way, and especially for the tone given to his religious feelings. Mr. Henry Channing had then been settled for many years in New London; and amid the gloomy Calvinism of Connecticut had preserved a spirit free and bright, cheerful in hope, and utterly intolerant of bigotry. New London was in the midst of one of the “ Revivals,” which then were quite generally oversweeping New England. And Mr. Channing, though of the more liberal body, sympathized so far in the excitement, that a new spiritual interest was awakened in his own society; and the mind of William received such deep and lasting impressions, that he dated back to that period the commencement of a decidedly religious life. His feelings towards New London were, in consequence of this era in his inward experience, always strong; and we find a college classmate writing to him thus on the occasion of his revisiting it: “ I hope that the poor pilgrim has ere this trod on the consecrated ground of Palestine. New London you view with a partial eye, as the place where you acquired those habits of virtue and morality which have always influenced your conduct. Pleasant it must be to retrace these scenes of former times.”

From New London, William went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he entered Harvard College, as Freshman, in 1794, being then in his fifteenth year. And thus closed a boyhood that, in its elements and results, in the blending of generous impulses and fine powers with high principle and pure habits, gave promise of greatness which the future was amply to redeem.

## CHAPTER III. — COLLEGE LIFE.

ÆT. 14-18. 1794-1798.

IN tracing the growth of William's mind and character during the important period of college life, it is of interest to understand the influences which surrounded him; and of these a brief sketch is presented in the following extracts from a letter of his classmate and friend, Judge Story.<sup>1</sup>

“ You express a desire ‘ to obtain some general views of the circumstances under which the students lived.’ I believe that this can be best done by giving you a brief sketch of the state of the college, and the relation which the students had with the existing college government. Things are so much changed since, that it is somewhat difficult to realize all the influences which then surrounded them. . . .

“ In respect to academical intercourse, the students had literally none that was not purely official, except with each other. The different classes were almost strangers to each other; and cold reserve generally prevailed between them. The system of ‘ fagging’ (as it was called) was just then dying out, and I believe that my own class was the first that was not compelled to perform this drudgery at the command of the Senior class, in the most humble services. The students had no connection whatsoever with the inhabitants of Cambridge by private social visits. There was none between the families of the president and professors of the college and the students. The *régime* of the old school in manners and habits then prevailed. The president and professors were never approached except in the most formal way, and upon official occasions; and in the college yard (if I remember rightly) no student was permitted to be with his hat on, if one of the professors was there. . . . I must do all our instructors, the professors as well as the tutors, the justice to say, that their instructions were very valuable to us, and that they all took a deep and earnest interest in our advancement. For myself, I must own that at this distant day I entertain the liveliest gratitude to them for the aid given by them to me in awakening and guiding my love of letters. But private social access to them did not belong to the habits of the times, and a free and easy intercourse with them, which would now not be considered unbecoming, would at that time have been thought somewhat obtru-

<sup>1</sup> Letter to W. F. Channing.



sive on one side, and, on the other, would have exposed the student to the imputation of being what in technical language was called a 'fisherman,' — a rank and noxious character in college annals.

"These suggestions may at once put you in possession of the *intra-mural* influences of college life. In general, the students were then moral, devoted to their studies, and ambitious of distinction. There would be then, as now, an occasional outbreak; but I am not aware that either immorality or dissipation or habitual indolence was more in fashion than in succeeding times. There will always be a little sprinkling of these among students of an ardent and reckless character. In one particular a salutary change in the habits of life has taken place. There is universally far more temperance now than then, in the use of wine and spirituous liquors. But the instances of excess were rare, and were always frowned upon by classmates. . . .

"One circumstance is brought to my thoughts, on which I would for a moment dwell, because I am quite sure that it gave a powerful impulse to young Channing's ambition. At that period, all the scholars of the class attended together in the recitation-room at the same time, and of course recited their lessons in the presence of each other. The average number in the classes did not generally vary in any important degree from the numbers now in college, — at least not to a degree which would even now make the assemblage of the whole class in the same room inconvenient or burdensome. This general assemblage of the whole class in the same room at the same time had, in my judgment, the most beneficial influence. In the first place, it enabled the whole class clearly and accurately to ascertain the relative scholarship and attainments of each scholar; and thus one great source of jealousy, the suspicion of partiality on the part of the college faculty, was either extinguished or greatly mitigated, and I do not hesitate to say that the relative rank then assigned to the various members of the class by their own classmates was generally correct, impartial, and satisfactory. In the next place, a generous spirit of emulation pervaded the whole class. We were proud of our best scholars, and awarded them just praise with a liberal courtesy; and those who were thus distinguished were stimulated by high motives to deserve and to secure this approbation. No man, I am persuaded, felt more, or appreciated more justly, than your father, this truly valuable incentive to exertion. He had then, as in his after life, a lofty ambition for excellence; and he sought reputation by aims as pure and moral as they were enlightened. I must confess that I have never ceased to regret that the old system, the advantages of which I



have thus briefly alluded to, has ever been departed from in the college arrangements. If this were the proper time or place I would state many reasons why I hold this opinion, and which, at least in my own judgment, make the change more than a doubtful innovation."

It was amid these influences and opportunities that William's genius and faculties were to be matured. He was now in his fifteenth year, vigorous in health, elastic in spirits, in temper, as we have seen, enthusiastic yet self-governed, with powers active and well disciplined; and thus in every way fitted to enter upon this critical era of life. All who then remember him speak with especial pleasure of his animated expression, of his buoyant yet dignified manner, and of his general appearance of overflowing life. Washington Allston writes:—

"Though small in stature, his person at that time was rather muscular than slender; I should think it was even athletic, from the manner in which he prolonged the contests with heavier antagonists in the wrestling-matches that were then common among the students. And for animal spirits he was no less remarkable than for his intellectual enthusiasm, amounting occasionally to unrestrained hilarity, but never passing the bounds of propriety. I well remember his *laugh*, which could not have been heartier without being obstreperous."

This laughter is said to have been not rarely called out by this very friend, who, possessed of the most radiant humor, penetration, and sweetness, charming from his courtesy of manner and nobleness of feeling, endowed with an imagination that threw a lustre round every theme he touched, was then, as through life, a centre of attraction to all who could appreciate rare genius, eloquence, and refinement almost feminine in delicacy. Allston's room was on the way from the house where William lived to the college; and there he used to stop for friendly chat, while going to or coming from the lecture-room. One day he had a lesson to be accompanied with original designs in mensuration, and Allston, who was already skilful in the use of his pencil, proposed to give him an illustration. It consisted of pyramids of figures heaped upon one another's shoulders in various attitudes, each of which was a slightly caricatured portrait of the professors and tutors. This William offered at recitation; and the drawing was so spirited, and the jest in itself so harmless, that the instructor could not but join heartily with the class in the merriment it excited. This slight anecdote is mentioned, because it indicates a latent vein of humor,

which, though hidden in after years under a manner habitually serious, did yet occasionally emit scintillations.

The Rev. Dr. Pierce, who was his tutor, adds the following description of William as a student : —

“I have a distinct recollection of him, as, at that time, a fine-looking, healthy, muscular young man. But what I best remember was his excellence as a scholar. My department was the Latin language; and never shall I forget, while memory lasts, with what promptitude and elegance he rendered into English the passages from the classics which he was called to recite. I also heard his class in history. He was always in his place, and I invariably gave him the highest mark for good recitations. The government of the University were, I believe, unanimous in assigning him the first rank among his classmates. This, in a class containing such men as Judge Story, William Williams, Artemas Sawyer, Joseph Emerson, Dr. Tuckerman, &c., was no small honor.”

The classmate, from whom has been already quoted the sketch of the influences which surrounded the students, thus beautifully completes his friend's portrait as he was in college : —

“I became a member,” writes Judge Story, “of the same class in January, 1795, and was then first introduced to him. He resided during the whole of his collegiate course with his uncle, whose house was at some distance from the colleges; and partly from this fact, and partly from his reserved, although bland deportment, he did not associate much with his classmates generally, at the same time that he drew about him a circle of choice and select friends from the most distinguished of his class, with whom he indulged in the most frank social intercourse, and by whom he was greatly beloved and respected. So blameless was his life, so conciliatory his manners, and so unobtrusive his conduct, that he enjoyed the rare felicity of being universally esteemed by all his classmates, even by those to whom he was least known, except in the lecture-room as a fellow-student. The little strifes and jealousies and rivalries of college life, in those days, scarcely reached him; and his own rank in scholarship was, from the beginning to the conclusion of his academical career, admitted to be of the highest order. I do not believe that he had a single personal enemy during that whole period, and I am sure that he never deserved to have any; and his early reputation, as it budded, and blossomed, and bore its fruits, was cherished by all his class as common property. We were proud of his distinctions, and gratified when he was praised. We all then prophesied his future eminence, in whatever profession

he should make his choice. Speaking for myself, I can truly say that the qualities of mind and character which then were unfolded to my own view were precisely the same which in after life gave him such celebrity.

“Perhaps in no single study was he superior to all his classmates. In the classical studies of that day he was among the first, if not the first; in Latin more accomplished than in Greek. . . . His principal love was for historical and literary studies; for English literature in its widest extent, and for those comprehensive generalizations upon human life, institutions, and interests, which his enthusiasm for the advancement of his race and his purity of heart led him to cherish and cultivate with profound attachment. I remember well with what a kindling zeal he spoke on all such subjects; and one might almost then see playing about him the gentle graces and the rapt devotion of a Fénelon.

“In one particular he far excelled all his classmates, and I mention it because it is precisely that which in after life constituted the basis of his fame, — I mean his power of varied and sustained written composition. It was racy, flowing, full, glowing with life, chaste in ornament, vigorous in structure, and beautiful in finish. It abounded with eloquence of expression, — the spontaneous effusion of a quick genius and a cultivated taste, — and was as persuasive as it was imposing. All of us — by which I mean his academical contemporaries — listened to his discourses at the literary exhibitions, and at Commencement, with admiration and delight. If I might venture to rely on the impressions of those days, which yet fasten on my memory as truths unaffected by youthful excitement, I should be tempted to say that we all listened to him on these occasions with the most devoted attention; and that the mellifluous tones of his voice fell on our ears with somewhat of the power which Milton has attributed to Adam when the angel ended, so

‘that we awhile  
Thought him still speaking, still stood fixed to hear.’

I need scarcely add, that at the public exhibitions of his class he received the first and highest part; and on receiving his degree at Commencement, took also the first and highest oration, with the approval of all his class that he was the worthiest of it, and that he was truly *princeps inter pares*. Honors thus early won and conceded are not without their value or their use as prognostics of an auspicious and brilliant day.”

It will please the generous to know, that, while Judge Story thus



so clearly bore testimony to his friend's pre-eminence as a scholar, Dr. Channing was equally decided in assigning the first place of honor to his distinguished classmate. He often said, "Judge Story was entitled to the first part; but he chose a poem, and the oration fell to me."

It may be encouraging to students, also, to learn that young Channing did not gain the charm of style referred to without effort. He said that his first attempts were most awkward, and that he accustomed himself to compose mentally while walking to and from the college. He also studied elocution and rhetoric as an art, with the aid of Longinus, Harris, Watts, and Sheridan. He met friends, too, in private, to read and criticise each other's writings. Above all, he zealously took a part in the various literary societies, of his connection with which the Hon. D. A. White of Salem, who, though in the class before Channing, yet knew him well, has communicated the following detailed account.

"His connection with these societies could not fail to have an important influence in his education, — scarcely less, perhaps, taken in all its bearings, than the established course of college studies. The literary exercises and the social communion which these societies afforded were happily suited to the development of his fine powers and ardent sympathies, his free and independent spirit, his social, friendly, and benevolent heart. You will therefore be interested, I think, to know something of them.

"The first literary society in which we met as members was the Speaking Club, since called the Institute of 1770, the principal object of which was mutual improvement in elocution and oratory. The society consisted of members from the two middle classes, twelve to fifteen from each, chosen near the close of the Freshman year, and retiring at the close of the Junior year, with a valedictory address from one of the members previously appointed for the purpose. I find 'Channing' first mentioned among those chosen from his class. Young as he was, he was also elected their president. To show the impression which at that early period he made upon me, and I doubt not equally upon others, I may observe, which I now distinctly remember, that, in delivering the valedictory address in behalf of the members from my class, as my eye rested on him, I felt a respect for his taste and judgment, for his authority in criticism, which no other auditor inspired. I might apply the same remark to another occasion afterwards, in a different society, when I stood in a similar relation to him. The authority which he thus early acquired among us arose not more from his general rep-

utation as a scholar and critic, than from the active part which he took in all our meetings, and the sound judgment and earnest eloquence which often distinguished his remarks. His whole deportment and conversation among his associates tended to the same result. With his natural ardor and enthusiasm were united so much dignity and sweetness of manner and disposition, that it was impossible to be acquainted with him, however transiently, without feeling for him a sincere respect and esteem.

“The practice of the Speaking Club, at their meetings, which were held in the evening at some retired room in the town of Cambridge, was, for a portion of the members to declaim in rotation, while each declaimer, after his performance, stood aside to receive the remarks which any of his brethren might think proper to offer. All apparent faults of the speaker, which he might correct, or which others should avoid, were freely pointed out and commented upon, yet always in a spirit of candor and kindness. Sometimes different views would be taken by various members, giving rise to interesting discussions. Thus these meetings became schools of mutual improvement in extemporaneous speaking, as well as correct elocution. No one could be better qualified to be both teacher and learner in such schools than young Channing. Full of life and energy, and actuated alike by an ardent love of knowledge and by social benevolence, his noble powers of thought and feeling were never suffered to sleep when any intellectual or moral good was attainable for himself or others.

“But improvement in public speaking was not the only, nor indeed the chief, advantage derived from being a member of this society. The general influence upon an ingenuous young man, arising from a liberal intercourse with so many of the most intelligent and virtuous scholars of various classes, engaged in a course of interesting exercises for their common benefit, could scarcely be too highly appreciated. His interest in the proper objects of education would be increased, and his motives and views elevated above all unworthy pursuits, while he enjoyed the best means of knowing the real character of his most respectable classmates, and wisely forming those friendships which naturally spring from college intimacies, and which, when wisely formed, become blessings through life.

“Nearly at the same time that Mr. Channing left the Speaking Club, he was chosen into the society of the Phi Beta Kappa, and continued to enjoy, during his Senior year, the advantages of an intimate literary intercourse with the distinguished scholars of his own class. You are too well acquainted with the character of this



society, which has always been a public one, to make it necessary for me to say anything more about it than to give a general idea of the literary exercises and discussions which engaged the attention of its resident members at their regular meetings, during the last year at college. The object of these meetings was improvement in English composition, the art of reasoning, and the practice of speaking; and the principal exercises were dissertations and forensic arguments, previously written, and read at the meetings, with occasional debates and colloquial discussions.

“There was another society, of a similar intellectual character, into which Channing was elected, called the *Adelphi*, instituted in 1785, designed for religious improvement, but consisting principally of those members of the Senior class who expected to study theology as a profession. Their meetings were held on Sunday evenings, and their exercises, which were of a devotional and religious character, were chiefly dissertations, or discourses, and discussions on topics connected with theology and the clerical profession.<sup>1</sup>

“The Hasty-Pudding Club, composed of members of the Junior class, was formed more exclusively for social enjoyment and recreation. It originated with my class in 1795, at the beginning of our Junior year, numbering about twenty associates. Being transmitted to the next class, as they commenced Juniors, it became a permanent institution. I well remember the animating presence of Channing among those to whom we committed the society on the delivery of the first anniversary address. . . .

“I cannot, therefore, easily imagine a more eligible situation for young Channing than the one he enjoyed while a student in Harvard College, — considering, too, his peculiar advantage of living in the family of his uncle, the late Chief Justice Dana, where the want of refined domestic society, the principal defect of an academic residence, was so entirely supplied to him. Most faithfully did he improve the various privileges he enjoyed, making, undoubtedly, more rapid progress in good learning and intellectual accomplishments than any of his fellow-students, or than he himself ever made in any other equal portion of his life.”

Thus far a view has been offered of the general influences, only, which helped to form young Channing's mind. But far more fruitful germs were planted in him by the religious and social excitements of the time, which were scattering, as by the hands of the

<sup>1</sup> Channing delivered before this society a discourse, which was so much liked that he was strongly urged by his fellows to print it.

tempest, the seeds of new views of man, society, and human life. He has fortunately left the following mementos of the power which this stirring period exerted upon himself:—

“College was never in a worse state than when I entered it. Society was passing through a most critical stage. The French Revolution had diseased the imagination and unsettled the understanding of men everywhere. The old foundations of social order, loyalty, tradition, habit, reverence for antiquity, were everywhere shaken, if not subverted. The authority of the past was gone. The old forms were outgrown, and new ones had not taken their place. The tone of books and conversation was presumptuous and daring. The tendency of all classes was to scepticism. At such a moment, the difficulties of education were necessarily multiplied. The work required men of comprehensive and original minds, able to adapt themselves to the new state of the world. It is not to be wondered at, that the government and teachers of the college, most of them of mature years, and belonging to the old school, should understand little of the wants of the times. The system of government and instruction went on very much as it had done for years before, and the result was a state of great insubordination, and the almost total absence of the respect due to individuals of so much worth. The state of morals among the students was anything but good; but poverty, a dread of debt, well-chosen friends, the pleasures of intellectual improvement, regard to my surviving parent, and an almost instinctive shrinking from gross vice, to which natural timidity and religious principle contributed not a little, proved effectual safeguards. I look back on the innocence of my early life with no self-complacency, and with no disposition to exalt myself above those who yielded to temptation, and among whom I doubt not were much nobler characters than my own. But I do recollect it with great satisfaction, and with fervent gratitude to Divine Providence. Had the bounds of purity once been broken, I know not that I should ever have returned to virtue.”

Judge White bears a similar testimony. He writes:—

“To give you some idea of the lively interest taken in these subjects by him and the students generally at that time, I will copy a passage respecting it from my journal:—‘When I entered college, the French Revolution had broken up the foundations of religion and morals, as well as government, and continued to rage for some years with its utmost fury, spreading its disastrous influence throughout the civilized world, and pouring upon our country

a flood of infidel and licentious principles. Our colleges could not escape the contagion of these principles; and I have no doubt that to these, and the pernicious books embodying them, much of the disorderly conduct, and most of the infidel and irreligious spirit, which prevailed at that period among the students at Cambridge, may justly be attributed. The patrons and governors of the college made efforts to counteract the effect of these fatal principles by exhortation, and preaching, and prayer, as well as by the publication and distribution of good books and pamphlets.

“ ‘Watson’s Apology for the Bible, in answer to Paine’s Age of Reason, was published or furnished for the students at college, by the Corporation, in 1796, and every one of them was presented with a copy. So deeply and so generally had the French *mania* seized upon the popular mind in this country, and so susceptible of its fiery influence were the ardent spirits of young men, all alive to freedom of thought, of action, and indulgence, that reason, argument, and persuasion had for a time no power against it. Its own horrible manifestation of itself at length gave them power to overcome it, and scholars as well as people were roused from their delusion, and brought to look back upon it with shame and amazement.’ ”

It was the native tone of young Channing’s spirit, however, which made these movements of the age instructive to him. Judge Story most justly adds:—

“ From what has been already stated, you will readily be enabled to comprehend the general influences, the genius of the place, which surrounded your father during his college life. If I were to venture, however, upon giving an opinion upon such a subject, necessarily conjectural, I should say that there were few or none, of an external character, either powerful or active. What he then was, was mainly owing to the impulses of his own mind and heart,—warm, elevated, ambitious of distinction, pure, and energetic. His associations were with the best scholars of his class. His friendships were mainly confined to them. He neither loved nor courted the idle or the indifferent; and with the vicious he had no communion of pursuit or feeling. He then loved popularity, but it was the popularity (as has been well said on another occasion) that follows, and is not sought after. It is that which is won by the pursuit of noble ends by noble means. But I cannot help thinking that external influences were not those which mainly contributed to fix the character of his life. The influences which seem to me to have regulated his pursuits, his taste, his feelings, and



his principles were chiefly from within, — the workings of genius upon large materials, a deep and wakeful sensibility, an ardent love of truth and moral purity, a conscience quickened and chastened by an earnest sense of religious obligation, and a spirit elevated by a warm interest in the human race.”

And this leads to what was his most vital experience in college. The more his character and mind matured, the more earnestly did he devote himself to aspirations after moral greatness. He read with delight the Stoics, and was profoundly moved by the stern purity which they inculcated. But the two authors who most served to guide his thoughts at this period were Hutcheson and Ferguson. It was while reading, one day, in the former, some of the various passages in which he asserts man's capacity for disinterested affection, and considers virtue as the sacrifice of private interests and the bearing of private evils for the public good, or as self-devotion to absolute, universal good, that there suddenly burst upon his mind that view of the dignity of human nature which was ever after to “uphold and cherish” him, and thenceforth to be “the fountain light of all his day, the master light of all his seeing.” He was, at the time, walking as he read, beneath a clump of willows yet standing in the meadow a little to the north of Judge Dana's. This was his favorite retreat for study, being then quite undisturbed and private, and offering a most serene and cheerful prospect across green meadows and the glistening river to the Brookline hills. The place and the hour were always sacred in his memory, and he frequently referred to them with grateful awe. It seemed to him that he then passed through a new spiritual birth, and entered upon the day of eternal peace and joy. The glory of the Divine disinterestedness, the privilege of existing in a universe of progressive order and beauty, the possibilities of spiritual destiny, the sublimity of devotedness to the will of Infinite Love, penetrated his soul; and he was so borne away in rapturous visions, that, to quote his own words, as spoken to a friend in later years, “I longed to die, and felt as if heaven alone could give room for the exercise of such emotions; but when I found I must live, I cast about to do something worthy of these great thoughts; and my enthusiasm at that age, being then but fifteen, turning strongly to the female sex, I considered that they were the powers which ruled the world, and that, if they would bestow their favor on the right cause only, and never be diverted by caprice, all would be fitly arranged, and triumph was sure. Animated with this view, which unfolded itself with great rapidity

and in many bearings, I sat down and wrote to this lady," — laying his hand upon his wife's arm, who was listening by his side, — "but I never got courage to send the letter, and have it yet." This holy hour was but the first wind-flower of the spring, however, the opening of a long series of experiences by which he was to be led up to perfect consecration. It is a significant fact, that in this time of exaltation, when the young moral knight-errant took his vow of fidelity and was girt with the sword of love, his heart should have instinctively sought the concert in action of woman. This faith in her power of disinterested virtue, so early felt, grew always stronger; and if disappointment in the characters and deeds of men made him ever falter for a moment in his generous aims, he found his hope and heroism renewed by woman's purity and earnestness.

As Hutcheson was the medium of awakening within him the consciousness of an exhaustless tendency in the human soul to moral perfection, so Ferguson on Civil Society was the means of concentrating his energies upon the thought of social progress. Years afterwards, his remembrance of the enthusiasm in the cause of humanity, first called out in him by this book, was so strong, that he recommended it in terms which would certainly be thought by most readers greatly to exaggerate its merits. But it is instructive thus to learn the agency whence the mind and will of a man who in after life made himself so widely felt received their peculiar direction. In his Junior year he had already become a moral and social reformer.

In the letter describing his classmate's position as a student, Judge Story says he had but little relish for mathematics and metaphysics. This was, however, a misconception, and is contradicted by his own explicit statements. Indeed, his taste was prematurely developed for philosophical investigation. His very earliest attempt at sustained composition was an essay on Electricity, and his love of natural science was always strong. He delighted, too, in geometry, and felt so rare a pleasure in the perfection of its demonstrations, that he took the fifth book of Euclid with him as an entertainment during one vacation. In relation to this point, his classmate, W. Williams, writes: —

"The Sophomore year gave us Euclid to measure our strength. Many halted at the '*pons asinorum*.' But Channing could go over clear at the first trial, as could some twelve or fifteen of us. This fact is stated to show that he had a mind able to comprehend the abstrusities of mathematics, though to my apprehension he excelled



more decidedly in the Latin and Greek classics, and had a stronger inclination to polite literature."

But it was man's spiritual nature and relations which chiefly attracted his attention. He carefully studied, at this time, Locke, Berkeley, Reid, Hume, Priestley, and especially Price. And while reading Jouffroy, in 1840, he said to a friend: "I have found here a fact which interests me personally very much. Jouffroy says that Dr. Price's Dissertations were translated into German at the time of their first appearance, and produced a much greater impression there than they did in England; and he thinks they were the first movers of the German mind in the transcendental direction. Now, I read Price when I was in college. Price saved me from Locke's Philosophy. He gave me the doctrine of ideas, and during my life I have written the words Love, Right, &c., with a capital. That book probably moulded my philosophy into the form it has always retained."

One other intellectual influence, which took strong hold of him, deserves, too, special notice. This was the newly revived interest in Shakespeare. The young men at Harvard were just then passionately given up to the study of the great dramatist; and Channing's taste was so much moulded by the impression of his genius, that through life he was delighted by few intellectual treats so highly as by recitations from England's first poet.

The political questions of the day, however, were the most quickening excitement to a spirit so philanthropic and hopeful, and through his whole college course Channing was a fervent politician. As has before been said, one of his most favorite studies was history, and among his manuscripts of this period is a long, minute, and carefully prepared essay on the English Revolution. In public and private, in friendly conversation, debating societies, themes, and college parts, he took every occasion to manifest his sympathy with the social agitations of the age. But the most definite evidence of his political zeal may be found in the two following incidents, the first of which is thus narrated by Judge Story:—

"There was one circumstance of a public and political character, which was felt with no small intensity among us near the close of our collegiate life. I allude to the political controversies between our national government and that of France, which then agitated the whole country, and ultimately led to that sort of *quasi* war and non-intercourse which the public history of the times has fully explained. The party then known by the name of Federalists pos-

sessed a very large portion of the wealth, the talents, and the influence of the country. President Adams was then at the head of the national administration; a majority of Congress supported all his leading measures; and in New England his popularity was almost unbounded, and sustained by a weight of opinion and of numbers which is without example in our country. The opposition to his administration here was comparatively small, although in the Southern States it was formidable. Party spirit ran exceedingly high, and, indeed, with almost irrepressible fury. Badges of loyalty to our own government and of hatred to France were everywhere worn in New England, and the cockade was a signal of patriotic devotion to ‘Adams and liberty.’

“It was impossible that the academical walls could escape the common contagion. The students became exceedingly interested in the grave questions then before the country. They were nearly all united, heart and hand, in favor of the national administration, and warmly espoused the cause of their country. In our Senior year (1798), your father, who was among the most warm and decided in his political opinions, procured a meeting to be had of the students, with the sanction of the College government, for the purpose of expressing their opinions on the then existing crisis of our public affairs. The meeting was held. He made a very eloquent and powerful speech, and was seconded with great zeal and earnestness by myself and others. The result was, that a committee was appointed to draw up an address to President Adams, of which your father was the chairman. The address, with the exception of a single passage, afterwards added, was written by himself; it was reported to the students, and was by them accepted by acclamation. It was sent to President Adams, who made a written reply in a very commendatory style; and both the address and the answer were published in the newspapers of the day, and received general applause.”

In the *Boston Centinel* of May 19, 1798, it is found thus reported:—

•  
“HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

“The committee of the students of Harvard, mentioned in the last *Centinel*, offered the following address, which was immediately signed by one hundred and seventy students.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The College contained at that time about 173 students, according to the number of graduates in the Triennial Catalogue for 1798, 1799, 1800, and 1801.

## “ADDRESS

TO HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN ADAMS,  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

“SIR, — We flatter ourselves you will not be displeased at hearing that the walls of your native seminary are now inhabited by youth possessing sentiments congenial with your own. We do not pretend to great political sagacity; we wish only to convince mankind that we inherit the intrepid spirit of our ancestors, and disdain submission to the will of a rapacious, lawless, and imperious nation. Though removed from active life, we have watched with anxiety the interests of our country. We have seen a nation in Europe grasping at universal conquest, trampling on the laws of God and nations, systematizing rapine and plunder, destroying foreign governments by the strength of her arms or the pestilence of her embraces, and scattering principles which subvert social order, raise the storms of domestic faction, and perpetuate the horrors of revolution. We have seen this same nation violating our neutral rights, spurning our pacific proposals, her piratical citizens sweeping our ships from the seas, and venal presses under her control pouring out torrents of abuse on men who have grown gray in our service. We have seen her ministers in this country insulting our government by a daring, unprecedented, and contemptuous appeal to the people, and her agents at home offering conditions which slaves whose necks have grown to the yoke would reject with indignation. We have seen this, Sir, and our youthful blood has boiled within us. When, in opposition to such conduct, we contemplate the measures of our own government, we cannot but admire and venerate the unsullied integrity, the decisive prudence, and dignified firmness which have uniformly characterized your administration. Impressed with these sentiments, we now solemnly offer the unwasted ardor and unimpaired energies of our youth to the service of our country. Our lives are our only property; and we were not the sons of those who sealed our liberties with their blood, if we would not defend with these lives that soil which now affords a peaceful grave to the mouldering bones of our forefathers.”

The other incident referred to at once illustrates the state of feeling in those times, and gives proof that the unconquerable love of free thought and speech, which characterized Channing's manhood, was strong in youth.

At the graduation of his class, the highest honor, that is, the closing oration at Commencement, was assigned to him. The subject was “The Present Age.” But a condition was added, that all



political discussion should be excluded. The reason for this restriction was, that the students of the previous year had given great offence to the Democratic party by the severity of their remarks. And as the college faculty were on the Federal side, candor seemed to demand that Commencement day should not be imbittered by political jealousies. They therefore prohibited the introduction of party questions. The class, however, were highly incensed at what they thought an intolerable infringement of their rights; and one of them wrote to Channing in the following fiery strain:—

“I could join you, my friend, in offering an unfeigned tear to the manes of those joys which are forever fled; but indignation has dried up the source from which that tear must flow. The government of college have completed the climax of their despotism. They have obtained an *arrêt*, which from its features I could swear is the offspring of the French Directory. Although they pretend to be firm friends to American liberty and independence, their embargo on politics, which has subjected you to so many inconveniences, is strong proof to me that they are *Jacobins*, or at best *pretended patriots*, who have not courage to defend the rights of their country.

“William, should you be deprived of a degree for not performing at Commencement, every friend of liberty must consider it as a glorious sacrifice on the altar of your country.”

The “inconveniences” referred to arose from the fact that Channing, so soon as he learned the restrictions, formally declined to receive his part. The President at first accepted his resignation, thinking it improbable that a young man would be willing to give up the honors of the day, and even to endanger his degree, for such a trifle. But after a fortnight, finding him resolute, the government sent for him, insisted upon his performing his part, and made such concessions, that his brother, in writing to him, said: “I think you have gained a most complete triumph. The government have certainly treated you with a most flattering courtesy; how could you expect them to yield more?” His grandfather, uncles, mother, all joined, too, in urging him to rest contented with the concessions already made, declaring that “such advice would be approved in the very academy of honor; that even the pride of a knight-errant would not be wounded by the course; that he had struggled long enough for glory, and that yielding in this manner was rather a triumph than a defeat.” Thus constrained by the entreaties of all who loved him, he finally agreed to comply with the terms which the government had granted to his firmness, and went to Newport to pass the vacation and write his oration. The expla-



nations and assurances of the President permitted him to express himself freely ; and though he softened and shortened what otherwise he would have said, he did not sacrifice conscience or self-respect. Throughout, it was a bold and earnest discussion of the exciting topics suggested by the French Revolution. In delivering it, he spoke with much dignity and decision ; and rising, toward the close, to an impassioned burst of feeling, he said, with great energy, and a look directed to the faculty, which showed how earnestly he was inclined to protest against any restraint upon free speech : "But that I am forbid, I could a tale unfold, which would harrow up your souls." As the circumstances thus referred to were generally known, this sally was received with unbounded applause ; and when he left the stage, some time elapsed before the cheering ceased. "Many years," writes the distinguished classmate so often quoted, "have passed since then, but the impression left on my mind of the brilliancy, vividness, and eloquence of that oration is yet fresh."

With this characteristic act, at which, in later years, he was much amused for its excess of enthusiasm, Mr. Channing closed his college career in the summer of 1798.

Mr. Channing was now to select a profession. He had been a hard student, "not a mere seeker of a diploma," as his uncle Henry approvingly wrote, "but a real worker," and had gained universal respect for his rare powers and attainments ; his memory had been stored by extensive reading, and his judgment enlarged by constant correspondence with his sound-headed and sound-hearted grandfather Ellery ; he had joined cordially in social pleasures, though with strict regard to temperance, — it being remembered that Story and he invariably declined the use of wine, even at convivial entertainments, — and he had won the love of his associates by generous sentiments, cheerfulness, and unassuming courtesy ; though so young, he had already taken decided ground as the advocate of high principles in religion, morals, and politics ; he was all alive to his responsibilities, especially to his family in their poor estate ; and now in what way could he best employ his energies and gifts ? He did not hesitate as to his true calling. In his Junior year, indeed, he had written to Allston, "I have no inclination for either divinity, law, or physic" ; and still later he had so seriously thought of becoming a physician, that his grandfather wrote to him at length in relation to the duties and opportunities of that profession, and sent to him lists of the medical books which he should read. Even at the time when he graduated, most of his classmates supposed that he would choose the law, as the occupation best fitted to give

free field for the exercise of his powers of eloquence, and urged him to take that course; but to all such appeals to his ambition he answered, "I think there is a wider sphere for usefulness and honor in the ministry." The path of duty marked out for him by higher wisdom was plain. "In my Senior year," he writes, "the prevalence of infidelity, imported from France, led me to inquire into the evidences of Christianity, and then *I found for what I was made*. My heart embraced its great objects with an interest which has been increasing to this hour." He was the same man then that he manifested himself to be in mature life. As his classmate, the Hon. Richard Sullivan, bears witness, "there was in him the same clear and quick apprehension of truth, and the tendency to look higher than to human authority, the same warm interest in the good and beautiful, the same temperate earnestness and independence in maintaining opinions, the same perfect purity, simplicity, and orderly course of life. He seemed destined by Providence to influence largely the character of the times in which he lived."

He returned, immediately on leaving Cambridge, to his mother's house in Newport, there to arrange his future plans; and the following letters will show at once the temper of his college life, and the feelings with which he adopted his profession. The first is one written many years later to a young friend, whom he hoped his own experience might aid.

"At your age I was poor, dependent, hardly able to buy clothes, but the great idea of *improvement* had seized upon me. I wanted to make the most of myself. I was not satisfied with knowing things superficially or by halves, but tried to get some comprehensive views of what I studied. I had an *end*, and, for a boy, a high end in view. I did not think of fitting myself for this or that particular pursuit, but for any to which events might call me. I now see that, had I had wiser direction, I might have done more; but I did something. The idea of carrying myself forward did a great deal for me. . . . I never had an anxious thought about my lot in life. When I was poor, ill, and compelled to work with little strength, I left the future to itself. I was not buoyed up by any hopes of promotion. I wanted retirement, obscurity. My after distinction has indeed been forced on me. . . .

"You are in danger of reading too fast. In studying history, I sometimes made an abstract from recollection, sometimes thought over what I had read. . . . Walk out in the pleasant, still autumnal days. Such days did a great deal for my mind and heart, when I was in Cambridge. . . .

"I want you to find immediate pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge, in the works of genius and art, in poetry, in beauty everywhere, and in vigorous action of the intellect. In youth it is not a good sign to inquire perpetually, What good will this or that study do? Our kind Creator then allures us to the useful, by joining an immediate satisfaction to studies or pursuits which refine or elevate us. . . .

"Suppose a boy to choose to be a blacksmith, and to prepare himself for his business by exercising his arm perpetually, to the neglect of his other limbs and muscles, would he become another Vulcan? Would he not do more for himself by invigorating his whole system, and getting general health? You can easily apply this to the mind. What you want is to give tone, freedom, life, to all your faculties, to get a disposable strength of intellect, a power to use in whatever course you may pursue. A professional education, or one designed to fit you for a particular profession, would make but half a man of you. You are not to grow up merely for a particular occupation, but to perform all the duties of a man, to mix in society, to converse with intelligent men of all pursuits, to meet emergencies, to be prepared for new and unexpected situations. A general, liberal, generous education is what you need. Every study into which you throw your soul, in which you gain truth and exercise your faculties, is a preparation for your future course. I have found a good in everything I have learned. By degrees your destiny will open before you. You will learn what you are good for, what you are made for. I can say nothing more definite, and this is definite enough and full of animation. Do your duty, and you cannot fail to fit yourself for an honorable work."

The next is from his classmate, Arthur Maynard Walter, who died too early for his rare genius to be fully known and prized. It illustrates in an agreeable way the warmth of Mr. Channing's college friendships.

"I have just taken your letter from the office with all the fervor of a brother. I paid for it twenty-five cents, and would have paid twenty-five guineas, had I had them. It is full of the enthusiasm that I always admired in you, and occasioned all those indescribable sensations which arise from seeing opened to us the heart of a friend. I cannot agree to the present moral system of things. If we are to form connections at fourteen which are to be broken at eighteen, — connections which involve the best feelings of the soul, and which may affect in a great measure the future happiness or future misery of our lives, — we had better be without feeling, and



live in a state of solitude. I have enjoyed no nights equal to those, when you used to call at my window, and I blew out the candle, and we went over to Shaw's. What nights those were! And the days, too, you well know. Our classic ground, Channing, I dare say, is overrun with weeds and with grass. The careless passer-by never thinks that every inch of ground was consecrated to affection, and every rock on which we sat, and every rail on which we leaned, had a value such as vulgar souls can never know. This is a theme on which I could dwell long."

The closeness of the bond which united these young friends is thus also testified to by Mr. Channing: —

"NEWPORT, October, 1798.

"MY DEAR SHAW, — I can clearly discover from ——'s last letter, that you doubt the sincerity and continuance of my friendship. Have you lived four years with me, and do you know so little of me as to think that time or any new attachment can tear from me the memory of 'joys that are past'? They are intertwined with the threads of my existence; and it is only by rending these asunder, that you can destroy the melancholy recollection of our mutual happiness. I still remember your social fire, — how we collected round it, — shortened the long winter nights by nuts, cigars, and social converse, and strengthened the ties of our friendship. I was then supremely happy. I can still remember our walks by moonlight, — how we strolled over the Common, or took the solitary road to the Judge's. We leaned on each other's arms for support; we grew warm in friendly argument; the jarrings which sometimes prevailed among us only sweetened the concord and harmony which succeeded. O William! the memory of those days will be ever fresh within me. It has drawn many tears down my cheek. I am sensible that my happy days have passed, and I can only weep for them. My walks now are solitary; no friendly voice to cheer me; no congenial soul to make a partner of my joy or sorrow. I am, indeed, in the midst of my family, with the best of mothers, brothers, and sisters. But alas! I have no *friend*.

"There is a beach about a mile from the town. I never saw elsewhere such magnificence, grandeur, and sublimity as the wild scenery of nature here presents. The towering and craggy rocks, the roar of the waves, the foam with which they dash on the shore, their irregular succession, and the boundless ocean before, all contribute to inspire one with awe and delight. Here I go once a day. Sometimes I compare my fortune to the billows before me. I extend my arms towards them, I run to meet them, and wish myself



buried beneath their waters. Sometimes my whole soul ascends to the God of nature, and in such a temple I cannot but be devout. Thus I am either borne to heaven on 'rapture's wing of fire,' or else I am plunged into the depths of despair. How different from my situation at college! There I had friends to fly to, when the world looked gloomy, and forgot my miseries in the circle of my equals. Here I brood over melancholy.

"I am now on the point of changing my mode of life. New prospects have dawned upon me. A field has opened for exertion. I mean to rouse all my energies, shake off this lassitude of soul, and lose my sorrows in business. God alone knows what success will attend me. I mean to do my *duty*, and I feel careless about the event. I love misfortunes when they spring from a resolute adherence to virtuous conduct. I trust that my burdens will be no heavier than I can bear, and I shall be cheered when I think that the struggles which I make are the struggles of honest industry.

"I suppose you know the profession which I mean to follow. Yes, Shaw, I shall be a minister, a shepherd of the flock of Jesus, a reformer of a vicious, and an instructor of an ignorant world. I look forward to a better country, and, while I am journeying toward it myself, I wish to lead others the same way. I know that you revere religion; and I wish that in your political career you would sometimes look beyond the strife, crimes, and intrigues of nations, to the harmony and blessedness of the Christian society in another state. We shall take different courses in life, but we shall meet in the grave. We shall bow before the same tribunal, and, I trust, shall rejoice forever in the same heaven, and join in the same celebration of Almighty love. You will think I have grown quite ministerial, but, believe me, I cherished the same sentiments in college as I do now. In my view, religion is but another name for happiness, and I am most cheerful when I am most religious."

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#### CHAPTER IV. — RICHMOND.

Æt. 18-20. 1798-1800.

MR. CHANNING was now in his nineteenth year; and feeling that his friends had done all for him that was in their power, and yet more, that the whole of his mother's small income was needed for the family, he determined to secure some means of maintenance

while pursuing his professional studies. His state of mind he thus discloses to his uncle: "I am happy to hear that you approve of the step I have taken. It has always been a favorite wish of my heart to support myself. Bitter is the bread of dependence. All I had a right to expect from my friends was an education. This I have obtained, and I trust that Heaven will smile on my exertions." He was most happy, therefore, to receive an invitation from David Meade Randolph, Esq., of Richmond, Virginia, who was then on a visit at Newport, and was struck with the young man's intelligence, refinement, and liberal spirit, to reside in his family, as tutor; and in October of 1798, he left Newport for the South.

How much his family mourned this necessary separation appears by the following extract from a letter of his brother Francis, then residing as a lawyer at Newport: "William has gone, and most of my joys have gone with him. You know not the worth of this 'amiable and almost divine fellow,' as one of his classmates calls him. Where shall I find his equal? In vain do I search the whole round of my acquaintance. So pure a mind, united with so noble a spirit, and such exquisite feelings, I nowhere discern." To his mother, especially, his departure was a source of the deepest sorrow. And to this overflowing affection he thus touchingly alludes in the first letter after his arrival:—

"RICHMOND, November, 1798.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—A favorable opportunity has just offered, by which I can write to all my friends without subjecting them to the expense of postage. I begin with you. To you I owe the highest obligations. The anxiety and tenderness which you discovered at my departure from Newport will never be forgotten. I wish that my friends were not so deeply interested in my welfare. It makes both them and me unhappy. Every misfortune I experience is aggravated by thinking on the pain which it will occasion them. I often wish that I had been thrown loose on the wide ocean of life, without one eye to watch with friendly care my various successes, or shed a tear over my follies and miseries. When I was dashing over the billows, on my passage, I felt no fear for myself; but I was distressed when I remembered that I had left a mother behind me who was trembling with anxiety lest her son might be buried in the merciless waves. I understand from Francis's letter, that you had many high winds after I left you; and did not every gale come to me loaded with the sighs of a mother? I mention this because I wish you not to make yourself

unhappy by your concern for me. I know that I am far from home, where nothing but your good wishes can reach me. I am far from your social fireside. I am neither a sharer in your joys, nor the object of your fond attentions. But still the same sun shines upon us, the same providence is extended to both of us, and the same God who protects and blesses you will watch over me, and mete me out a portion of happiness. Our distance from each other cannot remove either of us from our common Parent. It is this truth which consoles me in my absence from home, and I wish that it might banish from your bosom those corroding fears for my safety which, added to the load of your domestic cares, must make life wearisome to you. I feel every day more and more attached to my new abode. I am treated with every attention which hospitality can bestow. My duties are neither numerous nor irksome, and I can find time enough for study. I am resolved to prosecute divinity. My highest hopes of happiness are beyond the grave, and I cannot do more good to mankind than by teaching them also to lay up treasures where neither moth nor rust can corrupt them. My dear mother, though I have so lately left you, I begin already to anticipate the moment when I shall see you again. Time has swifter wings than the eagle. Months and years will fly away, — and with what rapture shall I press you all to my bosom! Hope is the anchor of the soul. I lean upon it perpetually. I paint more blissful scenes in prospect than I have ever yet experienced; and should they prove as baseless as the fabric of a vision, I can still boast of the happiness which they give in anticipation. I dare not ask, but I should like to receive, a few lines from you.

“Your affectionate son.”

In Mr. Randolph's family Mr. Channing resided as an honored guest, and found there a circle of warm friends. Mr. Randolph was at this time the Marshal of the United States for Virginia, and his house was frequented by the most eminent citizens of Richmond and of the State, first among whom to be mentioned with honor was the late Chief Justice Marshall, who was then in the full vigor of his manhood, and commanded universal respect for his uprightness, wisdom, and dignity of presence. How much a young man of Mr. Channing's energy appreciated opportunities so rare, for enlarging his experience and acquaintance with mankind, can be readily understood. He visited freely in Richmond, availed himself of the hospitalities offered by the neighboring gentry, and on various occasions passed periods of leisure at plantations, besides travelling with the Randolphs in the summer season. Virginia

was at this time still in her prosperity, and scarcely beginning to reap the penalty which slavery at length brought, in blasted fields, deserted mansions, ruined estates, and scattered families; and Mr. Channing felt deeply the charm of the cordial and elegant courtesy which everywhere greeted him. With more enthusiasm certainly than discrimination, he wrote to his brother:—

“I believe I have before told you that the manners of the Virginians are more free than ours. There is one circumstance which particularly pleases me. The men do not forget the friendship and feelings of their youth. They call each other by their Christian names. They address each other and converse together with the same familiarity and frankness which they used to do when they were boys. How different from our Northern manners! There avarice and ceremony at the age of twenty graft the coldness and unfeelingness of age on the disinterested ardor of youth.”

And again, to Mr. Shaw, he says:—

“I believe I have praised the Virginians before, in my letters, for their hospitality. I blush for my own people, when I compare the selfish prudence of a Yankee with the generous confidence of a Virginian. Here I find great vices, but greater virtues than I left behind me. There is one single trait which attaches me to the people I live with, more than all the virtues of New England. They *love money less* than we do. They are more disinterested. Their patriotism is not tied to their purse-strings. Could I only take from the Virginians their *sensuality* and their *slaves*, I should think them the greatest people in the world. As it is, Shaw, with a few great virtues, they have innumerable vices.”

But pleasing social relations did not deaden his conscience, as in the case of others they have too often done, to the iniquity and miseries of slavery. He saw the institution, it is true, under its most lenient form; for the Randolphs were as humane as it is possible to be in relations so intrinsically unjust, and sought to reconcile their slaves to their situation, and to gain their attachment, by gentleness and kind attentions. Indeed, to judge from passages in Mrs. Randolph's letters to Mr. Channing after his return from Virginia, she was, and perhaps her husband also, disgusted with the whole system; for she writes, in relation to the threatened insurrection in Richmond, “Such is our boasted land of freedom,”—Mr. Randolph adding, “This is a small tornado of liberty.” In a later letter she thus still more strongly expresses



herself: "I feel a great desire to quit the land of slavery altogether." It is very probable, then, that in the family where he resided the evils of this lowest form of society were fully exposed and discussed.<sup>1</sup> "I heard it freely spoken of with abhorrence," he says. And wherever he went, language of similar hostility may well have reached him; for the words of Washington and of Jefferson were sounding in the ears of their fellow-citizens, and men had not then become insensible to the absurd and hypocritical position in which the United States were presented to the world, — as a nation professing freedom and practising oppression, asserting equality and enforcing castes, declaring itself in advance of the whole civilized world by a recognition of inalienable human rights, and yet perpetuating the worn-out usages of barbarism. Not then, either, had speculators discovered how to postpone the destructive effects of slave cultivation, by breeding children, like cattle, for the Southwest market, and replenishing exhausted coffers by the profits of the "vigintial crop." Virginia had already, to be sure, voted for the abolition of the foreign slave-trade, with the economical prospect of becoming the American Guinea-coast, and monopolizing the gains of merchandise in men. But the stimulants to this accursed traffic, offered by the acquisition of Louisiana and Florida, by the rapid growth of the cotton-trade, and the invention of the cotton-gin, were not then felt. And Mr. Channing probably received, therefore, from intelligent slaveholders confessions of their dissatisfaction with this system of concentrated inhumanity. He came, also, personally in contact with its workings, by sometimes assuming the duty of distributing the weekly rations, by visiting in the slave-huts, and conversing with the domestics in the household; and he was once left by Mr. and Mrs. Randolph, during a short absence, in entire charge of these beings made helpless by constraint and dependence. The result of this experience was, that he received an indelible impression of the wretchedness which such wrongs must everywhere and forever bring alike on slave and master. The following letter fully expresses the state of his feelings:—

"There is one object here which always depresses me. It is *slavery*. This alone would prevent me from ever settling in Virginia. Language cannot express my detestation of it. Master and slave! Nature never made such a distinction, or established such a relation. Man, when forced to substitute the will of another for his own, ceases to be a moral agent; his title to the name of

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. II. p. 231. One Volume Edition, p. 770.

man is extinguished, he becomes a mere machine in the hands of his oppressor. No empire is so valuable as the empire of one's self. No right is so inseparable from humanity, and so necessary to the improvement of our species, as the right of exerting the powers which nature has given us in the pursuit of any and of every good which we can obtain without doing injury to others. Should you desire it, I will give you some idea of the situation and character of the negroes in Virginia. It is a subject so degrading to humanity that I cannot dwell on it with pleasure. I should be obliged to show you every vice, heightened by every meanness and added to every misery. The influence of slavery on the whites is almost as fatal as on the blacks themselves."

The strong Federal predilections which Mr. Channing brought with him from the North, and the earnest discussions which he found prevailing in Virginia, gave a deepened interest to his intercourse with leading men, and doubtless exerted an influence to call his powers into their fullest action. In Newport, and at college, he had been accustomed to hear only one side of the important questions, which then stirred the country, presented; but now he found himself confronted with Democrats, and was forced to meet their arguments face to face. To a friend he writes:—

"I am very desirous to see the debates in Congress. I find this advantage from being in Virginia, that I must adopt no opinion on the measures of government without having grounds for it."

This was the period, it will be remembered, when the Federalists were still dreading the influence of French Jacobinism, and when the Democrats saw in their opponents the tools of English intrigue, when the black cockade and the tricolor were worn as badges by the respective parties, and when the most bitter suspicion and calumny everywhere prevailed. It was well for a high-spirited and honorable young man to be brought thus into close contact with persons of an opposite creed from that in which he had been reared. It disarmed his prejudices, enlarged his views of public affairs, substituted candor for bigotry, and taught him to consult reason more than his passions. Indeed, so far did he learn to be just in stating the arguments of his adversaries, that his brother writes to him reproachfully, as if he had become a "traitor." But his liberality was only the first development of that many-sidedness and cautious judgment which were so characteristic of his manhood. He was still a devoted Federalist, as appears from the following letters to his friend Shaw, which are of value at once as an illustration of the temper of the times, and as a proof of his mental energy.

“My political opinions have varied a little since I saw you; but it would be unfair to charge them to the Jacobinic atmosphere of Virginia. I trust that I am guided by sober reflection. I view the world as a wide field of action, designed by its Framer to perfect the human character. Political institutions are valuable only as they improve and morally elevate human nature. Wealth and power are subordinate considerations, and are far from constituting the real greatness of a state. I blush for mankind, when I see *interest* the only tie which binds them to their country; when I see the social compact improved for no purpose but the accumulation of riches, and the prosperity of a nation decided by the successful avarice of its members. I wish to see *patriotism* exalted into a *moral principle*, not a branch of avarice. I wish to see governments established and administered with the view of enlightening the mind and dignifying the heart.

“I have premised these observations, that you may be prepared for some remarks in the following pages which might otherwise surprise you. You wish to know what I think of France. I think her cause desperate indeed. The Republic has not many months to live. Enthusiasm and numbers have hitherto crowned her with success, but enthusiasm and numbers have failed her. ‘Her soldiers no longer burn with the ardor of freemen, and their ranks are thinned by the sword.’ Her citizens are discontented; her conquered provinces are rising in arms against her; and government finds no resources but in fleecing to the last farthing the miserable subjects whom former rapacity had reduced to poverty. The Republic is split into parties, and her naval defeats have leagued all Europe against her. This I collect from newspapers. Now I cannot conceive how a government, founded on corruption, unsupported by the attachment of its subjects, unable to pay its armies, shaken by internal convulsions, surrounded by rebellious allies, and attacked, as France soon must be, by the united forces of Europe, can maintain its ground, and withstand such formidable and consolidated opposition. If my information is correct, I cannot but think that the great nation is in a more critical situation than ever; and this idea has led me to suppose, in spite of the Secretary’s report, that she was sincere in her pacific professions to Mr. Gerry.

“Do not misunderstand me, Shaw. I do not say that France has given up her views on this country; I do not say that she is less active in her intrigues. I know better. What I mean is this, — that France rested her hopes of success on the party she had formed in our own bosom, that she never calculated upon that spirit which



burst forth on the publication of the despatches, that her critical situation rendered a war with us impolitic, and that it was of course her interest to heal the breach with us, and wait for a more favorable opportunity to accomplish her designs. Mr. Pickering tells us, that France wished to delude us by the semblance of a negotiation, and palsy our exertions. No doubt, she wished us to repose in the lap of confidence, till, having ‘sharked up the fry of Europe,’ she should have leisure to devour us also. But how, in fact, was this to be done? She had evidently been too sudden in claiming tribute from America; she saw that, in spite of her opiates, the eagle’s eye was vigilant, and ‘the national pulse beat high for war’; she saw unexpected energies of patriotism bursting forth, and measures of defence adopted, notwithstanding her tampering with our envoy. She had no navy to force us to compliance; and thus situated, I ask you, what was she to do? Was it not her interest to quiet our jealousies by forming a treaty with us, and delay to another and more promising period her schemes of bondage? Was not this the way to enable her infernal agents to work more securely against us, and poison the public mind with more success? These arguments appear to me of considerable weight; and though Mr. Gerry seems to be no Solomon in his correspondence, I am disposed on this subject to subscribe to his opinion.

“From considering France, I am naturally led to make some observations on the defensive steps which have been taken, and which, it is said, will be taken by our government. You may call me Jacobin, if you please, but I am *not* for enlarging our *standing army*. I wish there was nothing of the kind. It is the engine which has beat down the walls of liberty in all ages; and though I anticipate no dangers from the present one, still it is a precedent which may be fatally abused.

“I am opposed to standing armies on account of their *moral effects*. The activity of war leaves the soldier little time to corrupt himself. But an army in time of peace is the hot-bed of vice. Common soldiers are mostly taken from the dregs of society. Every farthing of their pay is spent in drinking. Example hurries along the honest and virtuous. Idleness vitiates them. They communicate their crimes to the neighborhood in which they are quartered; and I do not think that Mr. Giles was too severe when he said, that, ‘for five dollars’ worth of whiskey, they would, every man of them, sacrifice their country, and sell its liberties.’ A soldier *by profession* is too apt to forget that he is a *citizen*. Subject to the absolute command of his superior officer, he loses the dignity of a freeman, and looks with contempt on



subordination to civil authority. I have no time to write further. I meant to have said something on the alliance with England, which Paine is talking about; but I must defer it. Write soon; correct me if I am wrong. You will find that my political principles and ideas of government are branches of my moral system. — You do not know what an enthusiast I have grown for *liberty*.”<sup>1</sup>

“I feel vexed almost to madness, when I see the powers of Europe sitting so quietly till the chains are riveted on them. I expected ere this to have seen every nation, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, in arms against this scourge of society. But instead of that, the idle controversies of Rastadt are protracted, while Naples is given up to pillage, and France is gaining the command of the Rhine. . . . I think that the *great nation* has nothing to fear now but from the distressed state of her finances, and I suppose the plunder of Naples will fill her coffers for the present. The moment for action has been lost. Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland discovered the symptoms of a rebellion; — then was the time to strike a blow.

“War, in its mildest forms, is horrible. As waged by the Russians [alluding to Suwarrow], it is the heaviest curse which can fall to the lot of man. If rivers of blood have already been shed, we must now expect oceans. God of Peace! how long wilt thou leave thy children a prey to all the horrors of war? We have read so long of battles that they have become familiar to us. We hear of the slaughter of thousands and ten thousands with as little emotion as if we had been told that so many flies had been swept away in a storm. But is war on this account less calamitous? Do you remember the picture of *Horror* which Southey gives us in a note to one of his odes? I shuddered at it. I saw the milk frozen on the breast of the dead mother. I saw the babe hanging to her cold bosom. I am indeed sick of war; my prayer to God is, ‘Thy kingdom come,’ a kingdom which the Prince of Peace will govern.

“If I mistake not, the present period is the most eventful and important which has offered itself to our view during the whole revolution of France. In Europe, the fate of nations is suspended in the balance; and America, though so remote from the scene of blood and confusion, is most deeply interested in the decision of the contest. The eyes of all parties are now fixed on the President.

<sup>1</sup> This letter was written a year subsequent to the one which follows, but is placed before it, as it best introduces his political sentiments.

What can he do? The Federalists in all parts of the country seem opposed to a renewal of negotiation with France. The Jacobins are more clamorous than ever about his supineness in forming a solid peace with that government. . . . I rely implicitly on the firmness and independence of the President. I consider him as elevated above the clamors of faction, and superior to the narrow views of party. He is placed in so peculiar a situation, that no measure he can adopt will be popular. The only object he can propose to himself is the good of his country; and, I doubt not, he will pursue it with undeviating perseverance. I have ever considered it, and shall consider it, the interest of America to be at peace with all nations. Let me ask you, then, what influence the proposed negotiation will have on maintaining the peace of our country. This is the most interesting light in which it can be viewed; and it is my sincere opinion that it will tend rather to embroil us with the rest of Europe than to establish a lasting peace with France. . . .

“What will the rest of Europe think of us for making a treaty with France, when all other civilized nations have dissolved their connections with her? Have they not openly expressed their resolution to overthrow that government with which we are going to treat?

“Marshall stands at the head of the list, and I do but echo the multitude when I tell you that he is one of the greatest men in the country. His ‘Answers to a Freeholder’ had a tendency to sink him in the estimation of the Northern people. But if you lived in Virginia, you would think just as he did. I blush when I think of the Alien and Sedition laws. They have only served to show the weakness of government. They were worse than useless. Marshall is a great character. He bids fair to be the first character in the Union.

“I wonder how — could presume to touch the venerable laurels of Washington. Did not Washington distinguish himself before and after the time of Lord Howe’s command? Did he not show the most consummate skill in improving the advantages which Lord Howe afforded him? Witness Princeton and Trenton. Let any man read Washington’s own letters; and if he will afterwards say that Washington is not a first-rate general, I will yield the point.

“I rejoice with you, my friend, at the victory of Nelson. I hope the report is equally true respecting the defeat of Bonaparte’s land forces. The Directory, in their last communication, have

carried him safe to Cairo ; should it be true that he has repelled all human opposition, I would invoke old Nilus from the ooze of his fertilizing streams, and beseech him to overflow with his swiftest torrents the land he has long enriched, and sweep this prince of robbers from the face of the earth. There is one question which has arisen in my mind since the late news from the Mediterranean, and I think it an important one. Ought not a just policy to be alarmed at the disproportionate greatness and power of the British navy? There is not at present a nation in Europe to dispute with her the empire of the seas. We are exulting at the superiority of the British by sea, as we did a few years ago at the superiority of the French by land. We have bitterly rued the latter. Let us avoid the same error with respect to the former. I wish France to fall, but I do not wish England to rise on her ruins. We should be careful that, in destroying one scourge of the world, we do not give birth to another.

“For my part I care not how soon the contest is decided. Should the worst happen, should my native country be prostrated, by the arts and influence of demagogues, at the feet of France, I will curse and quit it. I never will breathe the same air with those who are tainted with the foul impurities of French principles. I never will dwell in the country where I was born free, when it is doomed to groan under a foreign yoke. With tears in my eyes, I will bid farewell to the roof which sheltered my infancy, and to the green graves of my fathers, and take up my abode in the foreign land from which I boast of my descent, and which my honest ancestors left in hopes of finding climes more favorable to liberty and to the rights of man.”

Mr. Channing's interest in public affairs, knowledge of national policy, and observation of men were yet more enlarged, while his powers of eloquence received a stimulant, from attending the debates of the Virginia legislature, which held its sessions in the Capitol at Richmond. He writes : “I have listened to these speeches with a great deal of pleasure. The Virginians are the best orators I have ever heard.”

But zeal in the political movements of the day, and social enjoyments, occupied only the intervals of time. His energies were mainly turned to the duties of his school and to private studies. He had under his charge twelve boys, to whose care most of the hours of the day were devoted. In after years, he thought himself at this time too strict a disciplinarian. But he may have found a

display of decision more necessary from his youth and smallness of size, of which an amusing illustration is given in the following anecdote, related by himself. An old colored woman came into the school to complain of some of the boys who had damaged her garden, broken her fence, and torn up her flowers, making loud complaint, and wanting to see the master. When he presented himself, she surveyed him for a moment, and said, "*You de massa? You little ting, you can't lick 'em; dey put you out de window.*" He assured her, however, that the boys should be corrected, and that she should be satisfied for her loss, remarking, "Poor mamma! she knew of no way of discipline but the *lash*."

Absorbed in the duty of teaching during the day, and living much apart from the family, Mr. Channing was prompted by his wish for quick advancement to pass most of the night in study. He usually remained at his desk till two or three o'clock in the morning, and often saw the day break before retiring to rest. He had also gained from the Stoics, and from his own pure standard of virtue, ascetic desires of curbing the animal nature, and of hardening himself for difficult duties. For the end of overcoming effeminacy, he accustomed himself to sleep on the bare floor, and would spring up at any hour of waking to walk about in the cold. With the same view he made experiments in diet, and was rigidly abstemious, while he neglected exercise from too close application. The result of these night-studies and of his general ignorance of the natural laws was, that an originally fine constitution was broken, and seeds of disease were planted in his system which years of scrupulous regard to health could never root out.

To these sources of illness was added another, which, as it illustrates his characteristic disinterestedness, may deserve a passing notice. When he left home his provident mother had given him a bill of credit on a house in Richmond, with the confident expectation that he would use it to refurnish his wardrobe. Money, however, he could not bring himself to take from his mother's large family, and never drew upon his friends. Depression of spirits and absorption of mind made him careless, also, of external appearances; and he preferred to expend his salary in purchasing books. The consequence was, that his clothing became much worn, and he exposed himself during the whole winter without an overcoat, except when sometimes he borrowed one to attend church. These necessities came *home* to him when, upon Christmas day, he found himself too meanly clad to join the gay party assembled at Mr. Randolph's, and, sitting alone in his study, thought of his own family circle, then gathered, far away, around



his mother's table. He thus alludes, years afterwards, to his homesickness : —

“I am not sorry that you have had a touch of this disease. I know it well. I remember how my throat seemed full, and food was tasteless, and the solitude which I fled to was utter loneliness. It is worse than sea-sickness, but it comes from the heart; it is a tribute to the friends you have left.”

This slight experience of poverty, too, sank deep into his memory, and gave him through life most tender compassion for the needy.

His general state and habits he thus describes : —

“MY DEAR FELLOW, — . . . Did you but know the exquisite happiness which the handwriting of a friend affords me, now that I am so far from home, without one companion of my youth to cheer my social or share my gloomy hours, I am sure you would snatch a few moments from sleep, or the round of amusements, to scribble me a letter.

“You seem anxious to know how I am situated. Very happily, I assure you; as happily as I could be at such a distance from Newport. I finish school before dinner, and all the rest of the day I spend as I choose. I am treated with every attention I can desire. I have a retired room for my study, a lonely plain to walk in, and you know, Shaw, that under these circumstances I cannot be miserable. I often look towards the North with a sigh, and think of the scenes I have left behind me. But I remember that cruel necessity has driven me from home, and wipe away the tear which the painful recollection had wrung from my eyes. Do not misunderstand me, Shaw. When I say *cruel necessity*, I do not mean *poverty*. No! It is a necessity which my feelings have imposed upon me, — a necessity arising from a change in my sentiments, and a peculiarity of character which I cannot explain to you. It is now that I experience the benefit of habits which I formed in early life. O Heaven! what a wretch should I be, how wearisome would be existence, had I not learned to depend on myself for enjoyment! Society becomes more and more insipid. I am tired of the fashionable nonsense which dins my ear in every circle, and I am driven to my book and pen for relief and pleasure. With my book and pen in my hand, I am always happy. Nature or education has given this bent to my mind, and I esteem it as the richest blessing Heaven ever sent me. I am independent of the world. Above all things, cultivate this independence. You know it is my idol, and I know of no virtue more necessary to a politician.”

The studies to which he was assiduously devoting himself were partly of a general character, as appears from the following letters to his friend Shaw, describing his literary pursuits.

“I have not yet received an answer to my last two letters. But I abhor ceremony, and when I have an hour’s leisure and a full heart I cannot enjoy myself better than in communicating my sentiments and feelings to a friend. I am now totally immersed in literature. I have settled a course of reading for three years, and I hope at the end of that time to have knowledge enough to enter on the world. I intend to pursue a course of modern history immediately. I have purchased a set of Russell, and shall take Belsham’s George the Third for a continuation. I shall gain more particular knowledge of the distinguished reigns by the help of biographies. I have understood that Harte’s Gustavus is a good work. What do you know of it? If it is worth reading, and not too voluminous, could you forward it to me? What do you think of Gillie’s Frederick? I can procure it here, if you recommend it. I have already Voltaire’s Louis the Fourteenth. Would you advise Sully’s Memoirs in this course? I shall begin Russell at Henry the Seventh of England. I have read all of Hume but the last volume. He does not throw light enough on the rest of Europe. Tell me what books must be added, and what retrenched. I wish I could get a good Roman and a good Grecian history. I know of none which is political enough, and which attends to the private life of those nations. Ferguson will carry me to the termination of the Roman Republic. But must I wade through Gibbon to get acquainted with the Empire? Rather than do this, I will wait till I begin a course of ecclesiastical history. What do you know of Mitford’s Greece? I shall now read history very differently from what I used to do. I shall read it as a politician and a moralist. I shall found my opinions of government on what I see to be the effects of different systems, and not on idle speculation. I study harder than ever.”

Of Robertson’s Charles the Fifth, which he at this period read, he once remarked:—

“That history first gave me a right direction in historical matters. The introduction is superficial; but to me, in my ignorance, it was full of light, and taught the value of *broad views* of human affairs; it led me to look for the steady causes and tendencies at work among nations. On the whole, Robertson gives a pretty fair view of the Reformation,—that mighty event,—though, indeed, he was a Protestant, and no Protestant can be wholly impartial.”

Speaking of —'s poem, he says: —

“In ancient times it was a common opinion that Parnassus was hard to climb, and its top almost inaccessible. But in modern times we seem to have made a beaten cart-way over it, and where is the man who cannot travel it without difficulty or danger? Helicon was once represented as a scanty stream, and happy was he who could get a draught of it. But now it has become so bold a river that every ploughboy in the field of science can water his horses at it. Inspiration descends in the form of a thick fog, and the beclouded fancy which paints a monster, while it aims at sketching nature, is admired for the boldness and wildness of its thoughts. . . .

“His metaphors, generally speaking, are too far-fetched. He shows more of the scholar than the man, and none but a scholar can understand his productions. He pleases the refined taste of the critic, but cannot strike the master-springs of the human heart. . . . His poetry is loaded with cumbrous epithets. He dazzles us with his splendor, but he does not warm us with the blaze of his genius. Like a glittering sword brandished in a sunbeam, he flashes light into your eyes, without communicating any of the heat of that luminary. I love an author who converges the rays of thought till they burn in a focus.

“The ancients heaped flowers on the dead, but gave a simple garland of oak to the living hero. I admire their taste. Let the servile imitator deck his lifeless page with a profusion of epithets. They keep the corpse out of sight. But genius can give the spark of life, the bloom of health, the lightning eye, the majesty of form, and the glow of thought, to her productions. What need, then, of ornament? . . .

“I have lately read Mrs. Wolstonecraft's posthumous works. Her letters, toward the end of the first volume, are the best I ever read. They are superior to Sterne's. I consider that woman as the greatest of the age. Her ‘Rights of Woman’ is a masculine performance, and ought to be studied by the sex. *Can* you call her a prostitute? She indeed formed a guilty connection. But even then she acted upon principle. . . .

“It seems that you cannot love Mrs. Wolstonecraft. I do not mean to fight with you about her. Her principles respecting marriage would prove fatal to society, if they were reduced to practice. These I cannot recommend. But on other subjects her sentiments are noble, generous, and sublime. She possessed a masculine mind, but in her letters you may discover a heart as soft and feel-

ing as was ever placed in the breast of a woman. I only know her by her writings. . . . .

“I have been reading Rousseau’s *Eloise*. What a writer! Rousseau is the only French author I have ever read, who knows the way to the heart. . . . .

“I would also recommend to you a novel, ‘*Caleb Williams*,’ by Godwin. Shaw, what a melancholy reflection is it that the writers I have now mentioned were all deists! Blest with the powers of intellect and fancy, they have not been able to discern the traces of a God in his Holy Scriptures, and have trodden under foot the only treasure which deserved pursuit. The pride of human nature has been the source of their error. They could not ‘become as little children.’ They could not bear the yoke of Christ, imbibe the meek and humble spirit of his religion, and rely upon his merits for pardon and acceptance with God.”

But while earnestly occupied in political speculations, and in historical and literary pursuits, — thus already manifesting the varied mental activity which marked him in mature life, — other characteristic tendencies appeared. The poetic temperament that had led him to the beach in Newport and to the willow walk in Cambridge — thrilling his soul with the sense of beauty, with yearnings to be free from imperfection, and visions of good too great for earth — was working strongly in him now. On the banks of the James River, dotted with islets of most brilliant emerald, — under the shadows of deep groves, where century-old sycamores reared their tall white trunks like cathedral columns, — among arbors formed by the gnarled grape-vines which twined their heavy folds over trees crushed down by their weight, where the bright, polished leaves of the holly glistened, and the gum and the maple spread out their various-tinted verdure, and the tulip-tree raised its pyramid of orange-green blossoms to the sun, — he passed hours and days of delightful wandering, lost in soft dreams and rapturous visions. In one letter he says: —

“I wish that you had been with me, Shaw! Arm in arm, we would have strolled over the fields, and gazed with admiration on the surrounding scenery. A few traces of cultivation varied the prospect, and all besides was wild and luxuriant. Nature still triumphed, — still reposed on her bed of leaves under the shade of the oak and pine. Our house was delightfully situated on the top of a little hill. Before us spread a valley clothed with corn and tobacco crops. Beyond it rose two mountains. The passing clouds rested on their summits,



and one continued forest covered their sides, extending down to the plain below. . . .

“We would often rest under the vine or the peach-tree, fill our bosoms with clusters of wild grapes, wipe the down from the delicious fruit, and slake our thirst at the friendly rivulet which murmured by our feet. I assure you I have had a charming time. I love the country. As you have but little work to do, you hardly know what is the meaning of the word holiday. View me, pent up in a school for eight months, and then let loose in the fields, free as the air I breathe, and emancipated from the frivolous punctilios and galling forms of society. I snuff up the fresh breezes; I throw myself on the soft bed of grass which Nature has formed for her favorites; I feel every power within me renewed and invigorated. . . .

“You told me, some time ago, that you had broken off the habit of musing. I wish I could say the same. You cannot conceive how much of my time, especially at this season, is thrown away in pursuing the phantoms of a disordered imagination. Musing wears away my body and my mind. I walk without attending to the distance. Sometimes joy gives me wings, or else, absorbed in melancholy, I drag one foot heavily after the other for whole hours together. I try to read, but I only repeat words, without receiving an idea from them. Do give me a recipe for curing this disorder.”

Later in life, too, in counselling a young friend, he thus alludes to his own early habits:—

“Do anything innocent, rather than give yourself up to *reverie*. I can speak on this point from experience. At one period of my life I was a dreamer, castle-builder. Visions of the distant and future took the place of present duty and activity. I spent hours in *reverie*. I suppose I was seduced in part by physical debility; but the body suffered as much as the mind. I found, too, that the imagination threatened to inflame the passions, and that, if I meant to be virtuous, I must dismiss my musings. The conflict was a hard one. I resolved, prayed, resisted, sought refuge in occupation, and at length triumphed. I beg you to avail yourself of my experience.

“It is true that every soul has its own warfare to go through, but still we may help one another. At your age there is often a great and sudden development of the sensibilities. The imagination is stirred up by the hope of a vast and undefined good, by prospects of the uncertain and boundless future, and plunges into *reverie*. The present is too narrow for us. We know not what we want. Sometimes a secret restlessness devours the young, a

mysterious fever of the spirit. We must not wonder at this. Our nature has mighty energies, and they are given to us, if I may so say, in a rude state, that we may reduce them to harmony. The young mind, when roused to life and power, is at first very much a chaos. Some at this critical period abandon themselves to sensual excesses, in hope of seizing that intense good which they thirst for. Some give themselves up to secret musings, and seek in unreal worlds what the actual world cannot give. Happy the young man who at this moment seizes on some views, however faint, of the true and great end of his being; who is conscious, amidst his wild thoughts, that he has within himself a power of forming himself to something pure, noble, divine; who sympathizes with the generous, disinterested, heroic; who feels that he must establish an empire over himself, or be lost. The idea of perfection is of necessity revealed to us at first very imperfectly; but if we seize it with faith in the possibility of realizing it, of rising to something higher than we are, and if faith give birth to resolution, then our youth, with all its tumults and vehemence, is full of promise."

And again:—

"Have you been searching into your own motives, affections, powers, secret processes? This may be most useful, if we study ourselves, not from self-idolatry, not under the notion that we deserve all our power of thought, but that we may learn our common mysterious nature, may learn something of all souls, may learn our end, and may raise our standard of judgment and action. But perhaps you have been employed with yourself in the sense of meditating anxiously and jealously on your defects, or of fashioning in reverie your own future lot. These are both bad occupations. I wasted a good deal of my early life in reverie, and broke the habit only by painful self-conflict. I felt that my powers were running wild, and my religious principles were infinitely important to me in giving me the victory. The best escape from this habit is found in interesting occupation, of an earnest, absorbing nature, and an innocent, cheering society. I have suffered, too, from a painful sense of defects; but, on the whole, have been too wise to waste in idle lamentations of deficiencies the energy which should be used in removing them."

And, finally, his romantic enthusiasm is thus laid fully bare, in a confession to his friend Shaw:—

"MY DEAR FELLOW, — I sit down to write you, to disburden a full heart, and cheer a heavy hour. It is spring-time, and a universal languor has seized on me. Not long ago, I was an eagle.

I had built my nest among the stars, and I soared in regions of unclouded ether. But I fell from heaven, and the spirit which once animated me has fled. I have lost every energy of soul, and the only relic of your friend is a sickly imagination, a fevered sensibility. I cannot study. I walk and muse till I can walk no longer. I sit down with Goldsmith or Rogers in my hand, and shed tears — at what? At fictitious misery; at tales of imaginary woe.

“My whole life has been a struggle with my feelings. Last winter I thought myself victorious. But earth-born Antæus has risen stronger than ever. I repeat it, my whole life has been a struggle with my feelings. Ask those with whom I have lived, and they will tell you that I am a stoic. I almost thought so myself. But I only smothered a fire which will one day consume me. I sigh for tranquil happiness. I have long wished that my days might flow along like a gentle stream, which fertilizes its banks and reflects in its clear surface the face of heaven. But I can *only wish* it. I still continue sanguine, ardent, and inconstant. I can remember the days when I gloried in the moments of rapture, when I loved to shroud myself in the gloom of melancholy. You may remember them too. But I have grown wiser, as I have grown older. I now wish to do good in the world. ‘I love a divine,’ says the good Fénelon, ‘who preaches to *save men’s souls*, and not to *show himself*.’ I perfectly agree with Fénelon; and to make such a divine as he loves, I must throw away those ridiculous ecstasies, and form myself to habits of piety and benevolence. One of the reasons why I dislike the rapture and depressions of spirit which we used to encourage at college is probably this, — I find none to share them with me.

“The other day, I handed to a lady a sonnet of Southey’s, which had wrung tears from me. ‘It is pretty,’ said she, with a smile. ‘Pretty!’ echoed I, as I looked at her; ‘pretty!’ I went home. As I grew composed, I could not help reflecting that the lady who had made this answer was universally esteemed for her benevolence. I knew that she was goodness itself. But still she wanted feeling. ‘And what is feeling?’ said I to myself. I blushed when I thought more on the subject. I found that the mind was just as passive in that state which I called ‘feeling,’ as when it received any impressions of sense. One consequence immediately struck me, that there was no *moral merit* in possessing feeling. Of course there can be no crime in wanting it. ‘Well,’ continued I, ‘I have just been treating with contempt a woman of *active* benevolence, for not possessing what I must own it is no crime to want. Is this just?’ I then went on to consider whether there were not many persons

who possessed this boasted feeling, but who were still deficient in *active* benevolence. A thousand instances occurred to me. I found myself among the number. 'It is true,' said I, 'that I sit in my study and shed tears over human misery. I weep over a novel. I weep over a tale of human woe. But do I ever relieve the distressed? Have I ever lightened the load of affliction?' My cheeks reddened at the question; a cloud of error burst from my mind. I found that virtue did not consist in feeling, but in *acting from a sense of duty.*"

Mr. Channing's poetic temperament was chiefly manifested, however, in the lofty hopes which it inspired for a state of ideal virtue in individuals and humanity, for "a more ample greatness and exact goodness, the world being inferior to the soul." In answer to one of his fervent outpourings upon these themes, his friend Walter writes to him: "I have read your letter over and over again, and should not deserve to live, were I not delighted with the beautiful enthusiasm and benevolent wishes breathed in every word. They are monuments of your goodness and benevolence to me more valuable than those of brass and marble. But, my dear Channing, is not your theory incompatible with the experience of ages?" And in reply to yet another letter, his brother Francis says: "You know nothing of yourself. You talk of your apathy and stoicism, when you are the baby of your emotions, and dandled by them without any chance of being weaned. What shall I expect? Nothing, certainly, but what is amiable and humane; but virtue in distraction may be as idle and useless, though soaring and sublime, as a lunatic." Friends on all sides, indeed, evidently thought him the prey of fevered imagination, and to one of their appeals to be more calm and prudent, he thus replies:—

"I will throw together a few observations on the subject, in as short a compass as possible, and without the least mixture of romance or enthusiasm. I do not mean to challenge you into the lists of argument. I do not fight for victory. I only wish to convince you that I am not so wild in my views, or so erroneous in my sentiments, as your letter represents me.

"You begin with observing, that 'the will of Heaven to man is declared in the situation in which he is placed, and in the circumstances of his life'; and you afterwards say, that 'every one is a Howard who like him applies his penny or his pound.' I cannot assent to this in its full extent. You evidently go upon the supposition that the circumstances of our lives are decided by Heaven. I believe they are decided by ourselves. Man is the artificer of his



own fortune. By exertion he can enlarge the sphere of his usefulness. By activity he can 'multiply himself.' It is mind which gives him an ascendant in society. It is mind which extends his power and ability; and it depends on himself to call forth the energies of mind, to strengthen intellect, and form benevolence into a habit of the soul. The consequence which I deduce from these principles is this, — that Heaven has not, by placing me in particular circumstances, assigned me a determinate sphere of usefulness, (which seems to be your opinion,) but that it is in my power, and of course that it is my duty, to widen the circle, and 'throw my beams' still farther 'into the night of adversity.' This, Francis, is the leading idea which runs through my letter, and will you call it extravagance?

"It is not enough that you do good in proportion to your power, when you have criminally neglected to enlarge this power. Will you call the idle man 'a Howard,' who indeed shares his loaf of bread with a brother beggar, but who, by industry, might have procured the means of making thousands happy? You understand me. I may have written a thousand extravagances to you which I have forgotten. But the great and striking principles which I advanced I have unfolded above, and they still appear to my sober reason as principles founded on immutable truth. You tell me I am only a candle. Perhaps I am less, — a farthing rushlight, a glowworm on a humble shrub. You say I am discontented at not being the sun. No such thing! Discontent is no trait in my character. Give me but the consciousness that I have done all I could and ought to do, and you pluck out every thorn from my bosom. I wish I could return your compliment, and say you were a candle. I wish I could point to a man of my acquaintance and say so. Philosophers tell us that a candle fills with light a sphere of four miles' diameter. Send me the dimensions of your sphere. Mine is fifteen feet by ten. Is it not shameful! Ambition has waved her flaming torch over nations, and set the world in a blaze. Avarice has penetrated earth itself, and with a steadier and more stinted light illumined the sunless mine. But show me humanity, with even one lonely candle in her hand, throwing a few beams into the night 'of adversity,' bringing to light the hidden treasures of neglected intellect, &c., &c. I dare go no farther, lest you should begin to compliment me about enthusiasm."

The form which his ardent philanthropy assumed was the one which must always cheer the truly noble and heroic, and which then presented itself in such glowing hues to many minds in France,

Germany, and England, — the vision of a *perfect society*. “Socrates and Plato,” writes his brother, “were schoolmasters; Pythagoras went farther, and formed a society of virtuous disciples, — a society wonderful, because unparalleled. It was, however, confined to but a part of Italy. My brother advances with noble ardor to a vaster enterprise. The world is to be his Academy, and all mankind his pupils. To make all men happy, by making all virtuous, is his glorious project. I adore it, thou moral Archimedes! but where wilt thou stand to move the mental world? Whither has enthusiasm hurried you?” &c. So, also, his friend Walter writes: “Will you make yourself miserable because you cannot reach the rainbow from the hill? In heaven, Channing, you will find the scope you seek for progression in virtue; but here the mind partakes of the clay which encloses it,” &c.

His views may be best learned from the following letter:—

“I have of late, my friend, launched boldly into speculations on the possible condition of mankind in the progress of their improvement. I find *avarice* the great bar to all my schemes, and I do not hesitate to assert that the human race will never be happier than at present till the establishment of a community of property.

“I derive my sentiments from the *nature of man*. What is man? for what was he born? To vegetate, to draw nutrition from the earth, and then wither away forgotten and unknown? O, no! he bears a spark of divinity in his bosom, and it is Promethean fire which animates his clay. Look at the human mind. See it bursting forth, spreading itself through infinite space, by its power of receiving ideas from external objects concentrating immensity in a point, and by its powers of retrospect and anticipation concentrating eternity in a moment. Need I mention his faculty of moral discernment, or his creative imagination? Now, Shaw, I would ask you, in what does the perfection of man consist; which part of his nature requires most care; from what source is his most rational and permanent happiness derived? The answer you *must* make is, ‘The *mind*.’ In proportion as his mind is improved in science and virtue, in that degree is he happy.

“Now, my friend, let me ask you to look on the world and to show me the man who is engaged in this improvement. All is hurry, all is business. But why this tumult? To pamper the senses and load the body with idle trappings. Show me the man who ever toiled for wealth to relieve misery, and un rivet the chains of oppression. Show me the man who ever imported virtue from the Indies, or became a better Christian by increasing his hoard.

Are not the mines of science forsaken for those of Potosí? Does not the pursuit of wealth damp our feelings, freeze up the tears of benevolence, check the flight of genius, and excite in our bosom distrust and suspicion towards our *brethren of the human race*? Does it not render mankind venal and mercenary? Yes; give me gold enough and I will buy up the souls of our whole species. I do not except myself. I love money. I have my price. And what is gold? Perishing earth and dust. What does it procure? Meat, drink, and clothing. Now, Shaw, since the body is so inferior to the mind, do you think that more attention should be paid to feeding and clothing it than is absolutely necessary? No. Is not this speculative opinion supported by fact? Do not nature and experience declare to us, that the more temperate we are, the healthier and happier we are? *The wants of the body, then, are few, and the labor of mankind is misapplied.* This conclusion is fairly drawn from the premises.

“But here you will cry out, ‘All this is theoretic nonsense. Man is selfish. He will always strive to gratify his senses; and if gold will procure these gratifications, he will always pursue it.’ Stop, my friend; I grant that man *is* selfish. But *ought* he to be so? Was man framed for himself, or for his fellow-men? On this point of morality I know we shall agree; and you will think as I do, that if we *can* substitute benevolence for selfishness, we shall add to the sum of human virtue and happiness. Again, ought man to provide most for his body or his mind? Here, too, we shall agree;—and no doubt you wish to see a love of science take the place of a love of money in the human breast. Now I think that these changes can be effected in the sentiments and feelings of mankind. How? By *education*. Do you wonder, Shaw, that you see so many selfish and avaricious wretches on earth, when you behold every mother, as she holds her child on her knee, instilling the maxims of worldly prudence into his tender bosom? How is it that you and I, in the midst of this infection, still glow with benevolence to mankind; and derive such high joys from the cultivation of our minds? Is not this an earnest of what would happen universally, were the world to unite in instilling these noble principles into the rising generation? Judge from your own feelings, whether the principle of benevolence, sympathy, or humanity is not *so strongly impressed on the heart by God himself*, that, with proper care, it might become the principle of action. Judge from your own feelings, whether the love of science is not founded upon so natural a sentiment—I mean curiosity—that, with the same care, it would pervade every bosom. I declare to you that I believe these

ideas to be incontrovertible. Do you not glow at the prospect? Behold the rising virtues attended by truth and wisdom, — peace with her olive-branch, compassion with her balm — O my friend! I can go no farther. I feel a noble enthusiasm spreading through my frame; every nerve is strung, every muscle is laboring; my bosom pants with a great, half-conceived, and indescribable sentiment; I seem inspired with a surrounding deity.

“ ‘But stop,’ I hear you say, ‘you are too impetuous. How will you lead mankind to educate their children in this way?’ Ay, there is the rub; there lies the difficulty. It is only by implanting benevolence and love of science in the mind of the parent, and rooting out *his* avarice and selfishness, that we can hope to see the child educated as we wish. ‘But how can this be effected? Do you mean to war with nature?’ No; I am convinced that virtue and benevolence are *natural* to man. I believe that selfishness and avarice have arisen from two ideas universally inculcated on the young and practised upon by the old, — (1.) that *every individual has a distinct interest to pursue from the interest of the community*; and (2.) that *the body requires more care than the mind*.

“ I believe these ideas to be false; and I believe that you can never banish them till you persuade mankind to cease to act upon them; that is, till you can persuade them (1.) to destroy all distinctions of property (which you are sensible must perpetuate this supposed distinction of interest), and to throw the produce of their labor into one common stock, instead of hoarding it up in their own garners; and (2.) to become really conscious of the powers and the dignity of their mind. You must convince mankind that they themselves, and all which they possess, are but *parts of a great whole*; that they are bound by God, their common Father, to *labor* for the good of this great whole; that their wants are but few, and can easily be supplied; that *mind, mind* requires all their care; and that the dignity of their nature and the happiness of others require them to improve this mind in science and virtue. Believe me, my friend, you can never root out selfishness and avarice till you destroy the idea that private interest is distinct from the public. You must lead every man to propose to himself, in all his actions, the good of the whole for his object. He must plough and till the earth, that all may eat of the produce of his labor. *Mine* and *thine* must be discarded from his vocabulary. He should call everything *ours*. Here would be no robbery, for a man could steal nothing but his own. No man would be idle where such sentiments and such examples prevailed; and where there was no luxury to enervate him, every man would have leisure to cultivate the mind. We



should sleep securely; we should live long and happily; and perhaps, like old Enoch, when the time came, be translated to heaven.

“You will tell me that this is all chimera, that if we could indeed convert one generation, it would be very easy to perpetuate this order of things by education, through those that followed; but how shall we convert this generation? Shaw! do you sit still and ask this question? Rise, rise! It is the voice of benevolence. Do you not feel new energies at the sound? Why despair of success? Are not you yourself ready to devote every moment of existence and every drop of your blood to the service of mankind? And are you and I the *only* virtuous ones upon earth? No! Thousands are ready to join hands with us. Truth is omnipotent. She must prevail. Are not benevolence and thirst for knowledge so natural to our race, that, by cherishing them in youth, when the mind is unwarped, we can form them into *principles of action*? Is there a man so hard of heart that you cannot find in him some string to vibrate to the touch of humanity? Why despair, then? You profess to believe in the Christian religion. Does not Christianity favor such a scheme? I believe it will be hard to reconcile Christian humility, charity, and contempt of riches with the present establishment of human affairs. Read Soame Jenyns. His arguments cannot be disproved.

“Rouse, then! Consider how you may best serve mankind. Lend this letter to Walter. ‘We few, we happy few, we band of brothers,’ will unite our exertions in the cause of virtue and science. We will beat down with the irresistible engines of truth those strong ramparts consolidated by time, within which avarice, ignorance, and selfishness have intrenched themselves. We will plant the standards of virtue and science on the ruins, and lay the foundation of a fair fabric of human happiness to endure as long as time, and to acquire new grace and lustre with the lapse of ages.

“My dear Shaw, I fear you will say I am crazy. No, no, —

‘My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music.’

Then you will tell me I am one of the Illuminati. Upon my honor, I never did receive any letter or letters from Weishaupt<sup>1</sup> in my life. These sentiments have arisen altogether from my detestation of avarice and selfishness.

“You will see, through the whole of this letter, an ardent desire

<sup>1</sup> Professor at the Bavarian Institute of Ingolstadt, and founder of the Order of the Illuminati, 1776.

to serve mankind. This is the reigning wish of my heart. Do try to think of some means in which we can unite our efforts for so desirable an end."

What particular plan had taken shape in his mind does not appear distinctly, though, from his papers, it is probable that he thought of joining himself, as minister, to a settlement of Scotch emigrants, whose fundamental principle was common property. Friends speak laughingly of his "great scheme"; and Walter proposes, in a vein of mock earnestness, to carry out the "imaginary republic of Coleridge and Southey, and a community of goods, in the backwoods, or, better far, in some South Sea island." He then goes on to expose what appear to him the peculiar dangers and temptations of "community," and ends thus:—

"Indeed, Channing, your sentiments are too extravagant. No doubt man would be happier if he were better. But the difficulty is to make him better. I do not know that this *can* be done. You say it is possible; but I can hardly believe. I fear that the German Weishaupt has been tampering with you. However, he never attacked your reason and judgment, but only warmed your imagination, by showing you, in distant perspective, beautiful scenes of men and women and children, sitting under oak-trees, eating acorns and drinking water. I suppose, in conformity with his wishes, you are studying German in order to be able to comprehend the mysteries of the institution, which are so sublime that the English language sinks under their weight. Jacobinism is closely connected with their system, is it not? and this is the reason why you tell me high things of the Democratic Virginians?"

His grandfather Ellery, too, in his plain, straightforward fashion, opens his mind to his young relative thus:—

"Godwin's 'Political Justice' is after the manner of the French philosophers. I am not acquainted with his moral character; but I despise French philosophists. Their system goes to the destruction of all government and all morality. I wish the poorer sort of the Godwinites and Jacobinites would push home upon their rich leaders in the doctrines of perfectibility and equalization, the necessity of a community of goods, in order to a consistency of conduct with principle. This would make a division among them; for I believe I may confidently say, that there is not a rich man of those principles who would share his property with the poor of the pretended fraternity. He might perhaps say, 'Be ye warmed, be ye clothed'; but he would not give a cent, unless for the purpose of

elections, or to carry some other favorite point. The principles referred to are deistical; and while men are absorbed in luxury, and entertain such high notions of human nature in general, and of themselves in particular, they will not listen with attention to the self-denying doctrines of the Gospel, nor submit to that subordination which is essential to order and happiness, but will oppose themselves even to the government of Jehovah. To stand firm in the midst of such characters requires a great degree of religious fortitude; but I trust persecution is not necessary to preserve your integrity, or enkindle your zeal. The rock on which the true church of Christ is built is not to be overturned by violence or by undermining."

These most kindly meaning, but over-cautious friends little knew the depth of that living well of humanity which, first opening in young Channing's mind while reading Hutcheson in college, was thenceforth to pour abroad an exhaustless river. The current might be diverted, but nothing could seal the fountain. Their advice influenced his judgment, but it did not make him for an instant untrue to the law of his own character. The project present to his mind, whatever it may have been, was laid aside; but the large philanthropy which prompted it was only purified by the sacrifice. No fears suggested by other minds daunted his own indomitable trust. Then, and forever,

"white-handed Hope,  
The hovering angel girt with golden wings,"

cheered him and led him on.

It would be interesting, however, to know how far this experience, that enthusiasm impelled him to plans which those whom he revered and loved thought extravagant, was instrumental in developing the deliberateness which was so conspicuous a trait in maturer life. And some may question whether he and the world gained more or lost by the vigilant purpose, then probably awakened, to avoid the least mistake. Were there not latent energies in him which never germinated, rich impulses which never bloomed and bore seeds for chance winds to scatter? Does not the Infinite Disposer balance the deficiencies of one class of characters by the excesses of another, and thus produce harmony by the counterpoise of contrasted energies? Can any created being approximate nearer to the right than by never compromising and never postponing, but always obeying, the highest impulse? On the other hand, most of those who knew Dr. Channing well would probably say that his crowning grace was the calm patience with which he refrained from

acting, until he was free to do so without a discord in any tone of feeling. He often declared that, if there was anything of worth in his life and influence, he owed it to the fidelity with which he had listened to every objection that was presented by the suggestion of his own or other minds to what he *wished* to believe or to do. He thought, too, that in younger days his impetuous nature had led him into error; and though he found it a hard trial to resist the fervency of his temperament, he was yet firmly resolved never "to be possessed," but, under all events, to "possess his soul in peace."

But while Mr. Channing's interests were thus broad, his feelings were constantly concentrating more and more upon religion, and a preparation for the ministry. And to his friend Shaw he thus writes:—

"I am studying divinity harder than ever. Thanks to God who made me, I have chosen the only profession which could make me happy. By studying the Scriptures themselves, I am trying to discover the will of God, and the uncorrupted doctrines which our Saviour taught. I am certain that I am impartial; and the honest mind is in little danger of going wrong.

"I once called myself a Christian. But till lately I knew not the meaning of the word. I entreat you, Shaw, not to absorb yourself so much in political pursuits as to lose sight of the most important of all your concerns. The distinguishing duties of our holy religion are humility, purity of heart, forgiveness of our worst enemies, forbearance under the heaviest injuries, detachment from the pleasures and pursuits of this world, and supreme affection to Deity. As charity is among the first of Christian virtues, Christianity necessarily requires of us an active life. It requires us to mingle with our fellow-men, and exert ourselves in promoting human happiness. By 'detachment from the world,' then, I do not mean monastic retirement. You cannot do too much good in the world.

"It is impossible for any one to be a Christian, unless he believes that the end of this life is to prepare for heaven, and bends his affections, his hopes, and his thoughts to this all-important end. Is your heart pure? 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Are you humble? By which I mean, have you such a sense of your unworthiness in the sight of God that you are willing to receive with an honest heart the truths which his Son taught, to give yourself up like a little child to be formed and guided by him, and to receive salvation, not as due to your own merits, but as a free and undeserved gift of God through Jesus Christ? 'Whoso-



ever shall not humble himself as this little child, shall not enter the kingdom of God.' 'Resist not evil.' Here is a duty too sublime almost for our performance. We can hardly reach to so divine a height as to imitate our Maker in doing good to the unjust, as well as just. Many Christians try to explain away this duty, and infidels laugh at it. But still it is in the Bible, and it ought strictly to be adhered to. What is the end of human existence? To prepare for heaven. How can we obtain heaven? By cultivating *love to God* and *love to man*. These are the great roots from which grow all the duties I have recommended. Now charity must govern us in all our conduct with mankind. Christ has expressly declared that this is a necessary qualification for one of his followers. . . . I assure you, I was struck with the sublime *precepts* of Christianity, when I began the study of the Bible. I was struck, too, with observing how far I had deviated from them. I found that I had not a pure, an humble, a pious, or a charitable heart. I saw how Christian charity differed from what I used to call benevolence. Everything was new to me.

"You may see from my letters the warmth with which I have embraced the Christian cause. Would to God that I could resign every worldly prospect, and bend my whole soul to improvement in religion and the diffusion of the truths of the Gospel. O Shaw! it cuts me to the heart to see the contempt and irreverence with which the name and the worship of the 'Majesty of Heaven' are treated by the generality of mankind. Do we not offer a new cup of gall to our crucified Saviour? Are we not as inhuman as the Jews? Do we not plat, like them, a crown of thorns for the head of our Redeemer? They despised him, and we are ashamed to acknowledge him."

From his own accounts, he was at this period much engaged in a patient, and, according to his means, a thorough review of the evidences of Christianity, being stimulated no doubt by the open avowals of infidelity among the intelligent men of Virginia. This examination led him, after long struggles and painful perplexities, to an unfaltering faith in the providential mission and miraculous character of Jesus Christ. It was under the impulse of this deepened reverence for revelation, that he began the serious study of the Scriptures, even writing out for himself quite a voluminous commentary upon the New Testament, which he afterward destroyed. He sought, too, the advice of religious friends; and we find him thus describing his pursuits and spiritual condition in a letter to the Rev. Joseph McKean, then lately settled at Milton, Massachusetts.

“DEAR SIR, — I applied to our common friend and brother, Francis, a few weeks ago, to desire him to procure for me a religious correspondent. I told him that I could not find in Virginia one young man to whom I could express my sentiments on religious subjects, or to whose bosom I could confide those feelings which the study of the Scriptures inspired in my own. I told him that I wanted a friend to whom I could propose the difficulties which I found in the Bible, — a friend who had devoted his life to the service of his God, to whom I could open my whole heart, and talk with the familiarity of a brother. In a late letter, he tells me that you were pleased with the idea of such a correspondence.

“I began the study of divinity with attending to the evidences of Christianity. I examined them with caution, and I think without prejudice; and I am convinced that this religion is truly divine. I have now undertaken to acquaint myself with the doctrines of this religion; and to do this I have not applied to any commentators, or to any authors except the apostles themselves. My object is to discover the truth. I wish to know what Christ taught, not what men have made him teach. I well knew that, if I began with reading polemical divinity, there were ten chances to one that I should embrace the system of the first author which I studied, whether right or wrong. I was certain that, as Christ came to save the world, every truth essential to salvation must be plainly unfolded in the Scriptures. I had also observed that many ministers, instead of guiding their flocks to the gates of heaven, had become so entangled in controversy as to neglect their most solemn charge, the saving of men’s souls. These are the reasons which have induced me to apply to the Bible, — that only source of divine knowledge, — and to the Bible alone. The advantages I have derived from such a course seem to prove the propriety of it. I might have found the same truths in other authors, but they could never have made so forcible an impression on my mind. I have been active in acquiring, not passive in receiving, the great precepts and doctrines of Christianity, and the strength of my conviction is proportioned to the labor I have bestowed. My heart, too, has been affected, as well as my mind enlightened. I have learned to view everything, as it were, through the medium of Scripture, to judge of actions by the standard of Scripture morality, and to estimate the importance of present wants by their influence on the happiness of another state. Such is the plan which I follow, and such are the effects which I ascribe to it. I would thank you for your opinion on the propriety of it.”

He then goes on to state some critical difficulties which he says have struck him, and closes as follows : —

“They do not affect any of the great doctrines of Christianity. But, as they are parts of the Bible, I wish to understand them, and as they are apparent contradictions, they affect the credibility of the history.”

Mr. Channing was at this time examining also the speculative doctrines of the various sects ; and he apparently pursued this work with something of the blended freedom and caution of his later years, for we find that he was charged by correspondents both with over-orthodoxy and heresy. One friend writes to him : “For my part, I must dispense with your sermon, as our *tenets*, I conjecture, do not coincide. You will look quite sober when I tell you that I am a ‘Price-ite,’ and believe, with him, an honest mind to be the one thing needful. I am quite a heretic, I know, on your system, but hope it is not criminal, as I am Christian enough to hold fast to every principle necessary to piety and to virtue.” But from the opposite side a correspondent appeals to him thus : “From an observation in one of your late letters, expressive of a doubt of the vicarious character of Christ, I am induced to think that you have not read Butler with that attention he deserves. I think he has proved that, if we are convinced by historical evidence of the truth of revelation, we are not to doubt of its *doctrines* because wonderful or mysterious. The arguments on the proposition are worthy, perhaps, of another attentive perusal. I am not singular in allowing them to be irrefragable. As a friend to truth, I shall with pleasure peruse your reply, and as candidly give to every objection its due weight. I must, however, request you not to unfold them in your letters, which are generally shown to —, as they may give unreasonable and painful alarms. You know the prejudices of education, and that to the last generation one step from orthodoxy is a deviation into heresy.” His liberality was probably quickened by the variety of opinions which he found prevailing round him, and by the catholic spirit that pervaded Richmond. But although he found advantage in thus looking upon all sides of dogmatic questions, yet his inward struggles were greatly multiplied, and his mental loneliness became almost intolerable, as appears from the following extracts from letters.

“Would, Shaw, that you were here. I want a friend ; but I can nowhere find one. My social feelings are as strong as ever. But I cannot often gratify them. I am sick of the unmeaning conversation of fashionable circles. By *society*, I mean the communion of

souls. But where is this to be found? How I long to lean upon your arm, as I walk through the woods! But away with gloom. . . . I cannot but thank you for your kind attentions, which from any one else would be burdensome to me. But knowing the goodness of your heart, and that you receive more happiness in conferring than I can in receiving your favors, I banish the painful idea from my mind that I am troublesome to you, and enjoy without alloy all the pleasures which your friendship provides for me.

“If you can indeed find leisure, write, I beg of you. I would empty my light purse (for light it is) every day of the week, if money could purchase such letters as I have to-night received. Do not construe anything I have said into an indifference about hearing from you. I wish you could see the rapture beam in my dull eyes as I open your packages; you would want no other proof of my eagerness to correspond with you.”

There was at that time but one church in Richmond, though services were held also in the Hall of Burgesses, where an Episcopalian and a Presbyterian alternately officiated; and interest in religion generally was slight. Mr. Channing was driven to rely, therefore, very much upon himself in determining his views, and finding nutriment for devoutness and love. His trials and struggles he thus makes known to his uncle:—

“Would to God that I could return a favorable answer to your question respecting religion! Christianity is here breathing its last. I cannot find a friend with whom I can even converse on religious subjects. I am obliged to confine my feelings to my own bosom. How often, when I have walked out into the country, have I looked for a companion to whom I could address the language of praise and adoration which was trembling on my lips, and which the surrounding scenes of nature had excited! But in vain. I fear that they read the volume of nature without once thinking of its Author. The Bible is wholly neglected. That treasure of wisdom and comfort is trodden under foot. The wonders of redeeming love excite no sentiments of gratitude. The glad tidings of a Saviour are heard without joy. Infidelity is very general among the higher classes; and they who do not reject Christianity can hardly be said to believe, as they never examine the foundations on which it rests. In fine, religion is in a deplorable state. Many of the people have wondered how I could embrace such an *unprofitable* profession as the ministry. Alas! they know not the riches which God has promised to those who serve him. You may fear,



my uncle, lest I have fallen a prey to the contagion of example. Thanks to God! I have maintained my ground. The streams of dissipation have flowed by me, and I have not felt a wish to taste them.

“I will go farther, Sir. I believe that I never experienced that *change of heart* which is necessary to constitute a Christian till within a few months past. The worldling would laugh at me; he would call conversion a farce. But the man who has felt the influences of the Holy Spirit can oppose fact and experience to empty declaration and contemptuous sneers. You remember the language of the blind man whom Jesus healed, — ‘This I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.’ Such is the language which the real Christian may truly utter. Once, and not long ago, I was blind, blind to my own condition, blind to the goodness of God, and blind to the love of my Redeemer. Now I behold with shame and confusion the depravity and rottenness of my heart. Now I behold with love and admiration the long-suffering and infinite benevolence of Deity.

“All my sentiments and affections have lately changed. I once considered mere moral attainments as the only object I had to pursue. I have now solemnly given myself up to God. I consider supreme love to him as the first of all duties, and morality seems but a branch from the vigorous root of religion. I love mankind because they are the children of God. I practise temperance, and strive for purity of heart, that I may become a temple for his Holy Spirit to dwell in. I long, most earnestly long, to be such a minister as Fénelon describes. Religion is the only treasure worth pursuing. I consider the man who recommends it to society as more useful than the greatest statesman and patriot who adorns the page of history. What liberty so valuable as liberty of heart, — freedom from sin?”

In this letter, it will be observed, Mr. Channing says, “I have now solemnly given myself up to God”; and among his papers is found his act of self-consecration. One reads the time-stained writing with reverent tenderness, as he would take from a crypt a sacred relic; but it is of too personal a character to publish. It is chiefly remarkable for the sincerity with which its writer lays bare the morbid action of his soul, and for the care with which he seeks to guard against renewed failure in every possible emergency, and to map out clearly the path of duty in all relations. This paper marks the transition-point in the development of his character. Henceforth there will be less impetuosity, more steadfastness, less

bold enthusiasm, more forethought, vigilance, and patient hope. An on-looker may be inclined to mourn that conscientiousness so strictly rules an originally buoyant genius; but he will see, too, with what beautiful radiance, love, constantly brightening like a central sun, throws peace and joy upon balanced powers, moving in even orbits. The thought, also, will present itself, had this noble heart but reached maturity in an age when a faith serene as that of his later life was filling society around him like a genial atmosphere, then how would such an era of earnest piety have expanded every faculty, as the sunbeams open flowers! But these confessions, shadowed as they are by the gloomy theology which at that period overspread all minds, still prove how sovereign was rectitude in this man's moral nature, and how comprehensive and minute was its sway. There was no trait, through the whole of after life, so characteristic as the unsleeping oversight of his conscience.

Particular phrases, and indeed the whole tone of the papers which thus open to us the secret chambers of the writer's spirit, show that the views which he then held of his own inward condition, and of his need of a renewed life, were such as are commonly called "serious." It will be seen that he even uses the almost technical expressions, "change of heart," and "conversion." In regard to these expressions, however, and others also in the preceding letter, it is but right to add that he frequently asserted, without reservation, that he was *never* either a Trinitarian or a Calvinist; and once, at a later period of life, when asked by a most estimable Orthodox acquaintance, "whether he had not at some time experienced conversion," he answered, "I should say not, unless the whole of my life may be called, as it truly has been, a *process* of conversion"; to which this quaint rejoinder was made: "Then, friend Channing, you were born regenerate, for you certainly are now a child of God."

Of this important era in his life, Dr. Channing, as late as 1842, thus wrote to a friend:<sup>1</sup> —

"Your account of Richmond was very interesting. You little suspected how many remembrances your letter was to awaken in me. I spent a year and a half there, and perhaps the most eventful of my life. I lived alone, too poor to buy books, spending my days and nights in an outbuilding, with no one beneath my roof except during the hours of school-keeping. There I toiled as I have never done since, for gradually my constitution sank under

<sup>1</sup> Huguenots in America. By Mrs. George Lee. Appendix, p. 282.

the unremitting exertion. With not a human being to whom I could communicate my deepest thoughts and feelings, and shrinking from common society, I passed through intellectual and moral conflicts, through excitements of heart and mind, so absorbing as often to banish sleep, and to destroy almost wholly the power of digestion. I was worn well-nigh to a skeleton. Yet I look back on those days and nights of loneliness and frequent gloom with thankfulness. If I ever struggled with my whole soul for purity, truth, and goodness, it was there. There, amidst sore trials, the great question, I trust, was settled within me, whether I would obey the higher or lower principles of my nature, — whether I would be the victim of passion, the world, or the free child and servant of God. It is an interesting recollection, that this great conflict was going on within me, and that my mind was then receiving its impulse towards the perfect, without a thought or suspicion of one person around me as to what I was experiencing. And is not this the case continually? The greatest work on earth is going on near us, perhaps under our roof, and we know it not. In a licentious, intemperate city, one spirit, at least, was preparing, in silence and loneliness, to toil, not wholly in vain, for truth and holiness."

He returned to Newport in July of the year 1800. The vessel in which he sailed was a sloop engaged in transporting coal. It was in a most wretched condition, being leaky and damp, and worse manned, for the captain and crew were drunken. They ran upon a shoal, and lay there till fortunately lifted off by the next tide. He was very ill and much exposed. And his friends were shocked, on his arrival, to find the vigorous, healthy young man, who had left them eighteen months before, changed to a thin and pallid invalid. His days of health were gone, and henceforth he was to experience in the constantly depressed tone of a most delicate organization the severest trial of his life.

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## CHAPTER V. — STUDIES AND SETTLEMENT.

Æt. 20-23. 1800-1803.

AT Newport, in the bosom of his family, Mr. Channing now remained for a year and a half, devoted to the pursuit of his theological studies, and having under his charge the son of his Virginia friend, Mr. Randolph, and his own youngest brother, whom he was

preparing for college. It was as deep delight to him to be at home, as it was to his mother, sisters, and brothers to have him with them. Francis had been compelled to return to Cambridge, where he was established as a lawyer. William thus became the head of the household; and it was in this situation that his lovely domestic character began fully to display itself. The mantle of his father's sweetness fell upon him. When troubles and anxieties grew too strong for his mother to bear with equanimity, he would pass his arm around her, saying, "It will all be well, — it will all be well." He began, too, family devotions, and produced an impression of holiness and gentle dignity upon the minds of the younger members of the home circle, which can never be effaced. It is said that he was conscious, however, of an inherited tendency to irritability and sternness, which sometimes displayed itself in words or deeds; and that, sorrowing over such frailty, and feeling its unworthiness, he resolved that he would never become a minister till he had gained a control over all angry dispositions. The struggle led to a beautiful triumph; and no one, who saw the unbroken serenity of his mature manhood, could easily conceive that there had ever been an original excitability to overcome. His disinterestedness and anxious care for each and every one around him were unvarying. He undertook the superintendence of his three sisters' education, and induced one of them to give herself up very much to his guidance. "This year," writes this sister, "is impressed on my mind by his kind interest in me. He used to take me on his lap, and hold long conversations, which I sometimes thought too serious, though he would also play draughts with me for my amusement. He led me to walk with him, also, on the beach, when he would attract my attention to the glories of nature, and of its Author." He was at this time, though not unsocial, yet disinclined to large companies, and fond of retirement. Such a course, he used to say, "made less work for repentance." His whole mode of life was extremely simple and abstemious, partly with the view of restoring his enfeebled health, but still more because he felt such habits to be favorable to the calmness and clearness of mind and the pure spirituality which he aspired to reach.

The following extracts from his early papers will best show the manner in which, at this period, he was endeavoring to discipline his spirit.

"I must not consider doing good as an accidental pleasure, but make it the business of life. Let me seek, not wait, for opportunities. Let the active spirit of Christian charity be ever watch-



ful in discovering objects, and persevering in devising means of usefulness. Love is happiness; he who grows in love grows in happiness. God is Love; and his image in us is love. If I would resemble him, let me strengthen love. I feel now that a degrading selfishness reigns in my heart."

"In doing good, let me aim at simplicity of means. There is no need of expressing my intention, of asking an idle question, of appearing to labor. Let a silent, persevering course of action, lead me to my end."

"Poverty and sickness have the first claims for relief. Let me, in my solitary walks by night, search for wretchedness, and for my Lord's sake communicate the last of my store. Let me remember with Titus, that I have lost that day in which I have done no good to a fellow-man."

"But there are higher ways of doing good. I should show the influence of religion in my life and conversation. Religion is amiable, gentle, cheerful, serene; a friend to the social affections, the source of disinterestedness. Let me not represent it, then, as gloomy or hopeless. Levity, unmeaning gayety, however, throws the mind off its guard, and opens the door to every temptation. Strict self-command is absolutely necessary. The Christian, though cheerful, is vigilant."

"Let charity embrace in her broad arms all sects. Why should I brand any who differ from me with opprobrious epithets? Let me unite with all who love Jesus Christ in sincerity in propagating his religion."

"It will sometimes be necessary to change the tone of approbation and pity to that of denial. But let me act on such occasions deliberately, not from whim or dislike; and having formed my resolution, let me adhere to it with firmness. Let me offer my reasons in a short, perspicuous manner, or, if I wish to conceal them, give one positive answer, and leave the subject, undisturbed by remonstrance, ridicule, or reproach. Mildness is not inconsistent with manly firmness. Benevolence will lose all its beauty, and much of its influence, if allowed to degenerate into indiscriminate, weak indulgence. A world would be too small a recompense for one sacrifice of principle."

"When I feel irritable, let me be silent, let me quit society. I wish to be cool and collected amidst insult and provocation. I would avoid the diffuseness which characterizes anger, and vindicate my character, conduct, or opinions in as few and temperate words as consists with the regard I owe to truth. All impatience to stop

the person who speaks to me will serve but to irritate. Let me be calm, not using self-command as a means of triumph, but of mutual happiness."

The whole energy of his nature, indeed, was then devoted to a preparation for the responsible profession that he had chosen. His days were passed at the Redwood Library, where was freely accessible to his use a collection of books, extremely rare and valuable for the times; and at night the light in the little office near the house, which he used for a study, was seen burning long after darkness had settled over his neighbors' homes. But this period of his life has been most happily illustrated by himself.

"I must bless God for the place of my nativity; for, as my mind unfolded, I became more and more alive to the beautiful scenery which now attracts strangers to our island. My first liberty was used in roaming over the neighboring fields and shores; and amid this glorious nature that love of liberty sprang up, which has gained strength within me to this hour. I early received impressions of the great and the beautiful, which I believe have had no small influence in determining my modes of thought and habits of life. In this town I pursued for a time my studies of theology. I had no professor or teacher to guide me; but I had two noble places of study. One was yonder beautiful edifice, now so frequented and so useful as a public library, then so deserted that I spent day after day, and sometimes week after week, amidst its dusty volumes, without interruption from a single visitor. The other place was yonder beach, the roar of which has so often mingled with the worship of this place, my daily resort, dear to me in the sunshine, still more attractive in the storm. Seldom do I visit it now without thinking of the work which there, in the sight of that beauty, in the sound of those waves, was carried on in my soul. No spot on earth has helped to form me so much as that beach. There I lifted up my voice in praise amidst the tempest. There, softened by beauty, I poured out my thanksgiving and contrite confessions. There, in reverential sympathy with the mighty power around me, I became conscious of power within. There struggling thoughts and emotions broke forth, as if moved to utterance by nature's eloquence of the wind and waves. There began a happiness surpassing all worldly pleasures, all gifts of fortune, —the happiness of communing with the works of God. I believe that the worship, of which I have this day spoken, was aided in my own soul by the scenes in which my early life was passed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. IV. p. 336. One Volume Edition, p. 421.

It was at this time, also, that he saw much of the Rev. Dr. Hopkins, and received deep impressions from the influence of his character and doctrines. The following spirited reminiscences, communicated in a letter to Professor Park of Andover, present a very pleasing sketch of that consistent seeker after truth and holiness, who, whatever his speculative errors, was at least thoroughly in earnest.

“It was not until I had left college that I became acquainted with him, and a short intercourse dispelled all the fear and reserve which my early impressions had left in my mind. His conversation was free, rather abrupt, blunt, and often facetious. We saw at once that he had lived in his study, and borrowed very little from the manners of the fashionable world. He took pleasure in talking with me of his past life, his controversies, &c., and I regret that I took no notes, and did not, by questions, acquaint myself with the progress of his mind. He told me, I think more than once, of his first intercourse with —, who had received Calvinism in its old forms. — resisted his doctrines relating to the disinterested character of faith and religion in general. At length his objections were overcome, and one day, bursting into tears, he told Dr. Hopkins that he was conscious that he had never experienced true religion. Dr. Hopkins also gave me some particulars of his controversy with Dr. —, in which it was plain that he considered himself as the undoubted conqueror. I exceedingly regret that I did not learn more from him of President Edwards. My impression is, that President Edwards was a good deal indebted to Dr. Hopkins for his later views of religion, especially for those which we find in his essays on ‘Virtue,’ and on ‘God’s End in Creation.’ I hope you will point out clearly the relation between these eminent men. Dr. Hopkins had not the profound genius of Edwards, but was he not a man of a freer and bolder mind?

“I was attached to Dr. Hopkins chiefly by his theory of disinterestedness. I had studied with great delight during my college life the philosophy of Hutcheson, and the stoical morality, and these had prepared me for the noble, self-sacrificing doctrines of Dr. Hopkins. I have forgotten most of our conversations on this subject. I remember his once telling me that he did not consider the last part of 1 Cor. xiii. as referring to a future life; and I think that by the ‘perfect’ which was to ‘come,’ he understood the revelation of disinterested love under the Gospel. One day, a relative of mine, talking with him about the text Rom. ix. 3 (‘I could wish myself accursed’) observed that the passage should be rendered,



'I *did* wish.' Dr. Hopkins replied, that if Paul did not say what our version ascribes to him, he *ought* to have said it. The idea of entire self-surrender to the general good was the strongest in his mind. How far he founded his moral system on the 'general good,' may be learned best from a tract he left on the subject, which Mrs. Hopkins put into my hands after his death.

"He was very true to his doctrine of disinterestedness, as far as money was concerned. His liberality abounded in his deep poverty. One day my elder brother visited him to take leave of him, on going to establish himself in another town. Dr. Hopkins said to him: 'I suppose you hope to get money. Very well. Get it justly, and spend it generously, and I don't care how much you get.' Dr. Patten told me that once, at a meeting of ministers, the case of a poor widow was laid before them, on which occasion Dr. Hopkins gave all he had, a quarter of a dollar. He was accustomed to say, that after that time he never knew want, and was able to commit himself without doubt to Providence. It was my habit, in the years 1800 and 1801, to attend a monthly meeting of prayer for the revival and spread of religion. Our number sometimes did not exceed twenty or thirty. Still, a collection was taken for missionary purposes, and, as most of us were very poor, our contributions did not greatly exceed the widow's mite. On one occasion, as I have heard from Dr. Patten, however, a hundred-dollar bill appeared in the box. Dr. Hopkins had received the same for the copyright of one of his books; and he made this offering at a time when he received next to no salary, and often, as I understood, depended for his dinner on the liberality of a parishioner.

"His views of the Divine agency and sovereignty were utterly irreconcilable with human freedom. He one day said to me that he did not see how a man could be more *active*, or (as I understood him) more a free agent, than in being *pleased with a thing*; and in the last sermon I heard from him, he insisted that nothing was necessary to responsibility but that a man should do as he pleased. The origin of the pleasure or volition was of no importance.

"His preaching can only be understood by one who had heard him. His voice was most untunable. Some of the tones approached those of a cracked bell more nearly than anything to which I can compare it. He changed from a low to a high key, and the reverse, with no apparent reason. His manner was without animation. His matter, as far as I can trust my memory, was not made acceptable by any adaptation to the taste of the hearer. He had exercised the severer faculties of his mind too much to give a fair chance to the imagination. He had no relish for poetry, and



spoke of himself as finding no attraction in Milton or Shakespeare. If his style was clear and strong, he owed these qualities to his habits of thought, and not to any study of the best writers. We cannot wonder then that he was a very uninteresting preacher. He sometimes ascribed the unfruitfulness of his ministry to other causes, and seemed to see in it a judgment on himself. But a minister who has not the gift to win attention should see no mystery in his failing to do good. Dr. Hopkins was a student, not a preacher. His mind was habitually employed in investigation, and he never studied the art of communication. With an unharmonious voice, with no graces of manner or style, and with a disposition to bring forward abstract and unpalatable notions, is it wonderful that he did so little in the pulpit?

“His preaching had much *naïveté* when he descended from his abstractions. He used to speak without circumlocution, and in a plain, conversational way. Once, in preaching at Dr. Patten’s, he spoke of the ‘loaves and fishes’ as what men were still running after; and his simple, blunt manner provoked a smile from some of his younger hearers. He saw it, and said, ‘You may smile, but it is true.’

“He was an intense student. I have learned that he studied fourteen hours a day. He told me that once he allowed himself only four hours’ sleep. His study was visible from my father’s house, and I recollect that, rising very early one winter morning, I saw the light of his candle streaming through the window. He took little exercise. His frame was very strong, or he must have sunk under his labors.

“He was facetious in conversation. I preached for him once; and after the service in the pulpit, he smiled on me and said, ‘The *hat* is not made yet.’ On my asking an explanation, he told me that Dr. Bellamy used to speak of theology as a progressive science, and compare the different stages of it to the successive processes of *making a hat*. The beaver was to be born, then to be killed, and then the felt to be made, &c. Having thus explained the similitude, he added, ‘The hat is not made, and I hope you will help to finish it.’

“His views of the times were dark. I one day told him that he must feel encouraged by the many revivals which were taking place. He replied, that these would only continue the existence of the church, but that great trials were to be expected before its triumphs. He gave a great deal of thought to prophecy, and was supposed to have a peculiar gift for its interpretation; how justly I cannot say.

“Like most of the ministers of the time, he was a strong Federalist, and was greatly grieved by the political heresy of his deacon, almost his only male church-member, whom, however, he did not spare, though in losing him he would have lost the only officer of the church.

“He was a man of perfect honesty, and he loved honesty in others. I remember his giving me an account of a council, at which he assisted, for ordination of a candidate who had received liberal opinions on religion. The young man made no secret of his views, which were exceedingly offensive to several of the council. He answered the questions which were put to him with entire frankness; and I recollect the smile of complacency with which Dr. Hopkins spoke of his honesty, while dissenting from his opinions.

“Dr. Patten told me, what I did not observe, that he attached more and more importance to his opinions as he grew old, and that he bore opposition less patiently, though Dr. Patten, who was his disciple, thought him not at all excessive in this particular. I remember hearing of a severe rebuke he administered to a Methodist minister for his errors. One day, Dr. Hopkins met at the public library a singular man named Stuart, or Stewart, sometimes called ‘the walking philosopher,’ in consequence of his having travelled over a good part of the world on foot. Stuart was a man of much kindness, too kind to lay his weight on a horse, or to eat animal food, or even to kill a mosquito, when sucking his blood; but he was an atheist, and let drop some expression of his opinions before Dr. Hopkins. The Doctor was moved to indignation, and cried out, ‘You fool! were it not for God, you could not move a step from where you stand.’ Stuart replied calmly to Dr. Patten, who was present, ‘The old gentleman seems disturbed.’

“Dr. Patten told me that Dr. Hopkins was doubtful as to the reality of his religion. He clung to the decrees, though, for aught he knew, he might himself be decreed to endless misery. I suspect, however, that his doubt was like that which men feel as to their living through the day. He was habitually cheerful, though I once saw him in what seemed to me deep dejection. I was with him the day after he was seized with his last sickness. A minister present prayed with him, and for the continuance of his life. When the prayer was finished, Dr. Hopkins said something to this effect: ‘You should not have asked for my life. I can do nothing more. It is time for me to go.’ He could not at that moment have been distressed by doubts. Perhaps these were the last words I heard from him.

“These are very unimportant reminiscences, but I felt bound to

contribute what I could to his biography. The prominent light in which Dr. Hopkins is to be placed is that of a student seeking the glory of God and the spread of true religion, by purifying the common faith of its errors, and unfolding the Christian system in its harmony and true proportions. He had many qualities fitting him for a reformer, — great singleness of purpose, invincible patience of research, sagacity to detect and courage to expose errors, a thirst for consistency of views, and resolution to carry out his principles to their legitimate consequences. I consider him as having contributed largely to the more rational form in which Calvinism is held among us. I cannot judge in what proportions this credit is to be divided between him and President Edwards, and I shall be pleased to be enlightened on this point in your biography. I indeed shrink with a feeling approaching horror from some of his doctrines, but do not on that account withhold the reverence due to his character.”

The generous and discriminating notice of Dr. Hopkins given by Dr. Channing, in his sermon at the dedication of the Unitarian Church in Newport,<sup>1</sup> should be read in connection with these reminiscences by all who would fully understand the relation between this venerable man and his young friend. He there says: “I need not be ashamed to confess the deep impression which his system made on my youthful mind. I am grateful to this stern teacher for turning my thoughts and heart to the claims and majesty of impartial, universal benevolence.”

In December, 1801, Mr. Channing was elected to the office of Regent in Harvard University, — a situation in every way most desirable, as it gave him support while pursuing his studies, exacted only the slight duty of preserving order in the building where he resided and of exercising a general superintendence over the young men, brought him into the immediate neighborhood of the valuable library of the college, and, though separating him from his family, reunited him to his elder brother. He returned to Cambridge in the early part of the year 1802; and his appearance, manner, and character at this period are thus described by his college friend, Judge White: —

“At that time, I remember, my impression was, that a greater change had passed over him during the few years of his absence than I was prepared to expect. Instead of the firm, elastic step and animated manner which used to distinguish him, he appeared somewhat debilitated by ill health, and was more remarkable than

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. IV. p. 342. One Volume Edition, p. 423.



formerly for gentleness, and a serious air and tone of conversation. I had thought of him as peculiarly qualified for eminence in the legal profession, and was struck with some surprise on finding that he had no ambition for any such distinction. But I soon perceived how much more elevated was his ambition. His whole soul was engaged in the sacred studies to which he had devoted himself, and he at once showed that he had already become what St. Paul charged Timothy to be, — ‘an example in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.’ His wisdom, goodness, and sanctity, as well as his genius and intellectual powers, were strongly developed; and I began to feel in his company, what only increased upon me afterwards, a mingled affection and respect, approaching to awe, which the presence of no other man ever inspired in the same degree.

“ In the spring vacation of that year, being myself connected with the University, I had the measles badly at my room in college, and I have always remembered him as a comforting angel in my forlorn condition. As expressed by me at the time, ‘I suffered nothing from want of attention, &c. William Channing watched with me, besides bringing me nice things as proofs of the ladies’ remembrance. He has himself all the softness and delicacy of manner in attending to the sick which would become a woman.’ This but feebly represents the impression which his tender and assiduous care made upon me, and which I could never forget. A China cup, in which he brought some of the ‘nice things,’ being left at my room, has been preserved as a precious memorial of his kindness, and is still among the first objects to greet my eye in the morning, and to awaken delightful associations connected with him, — associations which can hardly fail to have a salutary influence through the day. The agreeable and generous manner in which all his favors were conferred added to their intrinsic value a charm which made the remembrance of them peculiarly grateful. Such instances of kindness, however common they may have been, are worthy of notice, as illustrations of his character, and of the genuineness and extent of his benevolence. He always seemed actuated by the same sincere and elevated Christian love, manifesting it in his whole manner, and in all his social intercourse, extending the same cordial greeting to those who were entitled to it, whether he met them in solitude or in society, among the humble, or in the presence of high dignitaries. The imposing presence of official greatness, which might make some persons forgetful of humbler friends, never appeared to influence him in the slightest degree. His own great mind was above the ordinary effect of such



circumstances, and it cost him no effort to be faithful to his convictions of the inherent dignity of man's nature, and to carry out his principles in all his conduct."

In relation to his theological studies, and the opportunities offered to him at Harvard, the same friend gives the following account:—

"When he was pursuing his professional studies at the University, we must remember that his advantages were very different from those now enjoyed there by the students in divinity. At that time the means of theological instruction were comparatively meagre; yet they were doubtless superior to what could be expected from the tuition of any clergyman unconnected with the University, and greater to Mr. Channing than to other resident graduates engaged in the like studies. President Willard, I well remember, in speaking of the Regent's office, told me that one of his views in recommending its establishment was to afford an eligible situation for some worthy student in divinity, who might be induced by it to pursue his studies at Cambridge. I have no doubt that Mr. Channing found it an eligible situation, and with his peculiar qualifications for self-direction, and his strong turn of mind for an independent course of study and inquiry, that he made greater proficiency than is now common, even with distinguished scholars, who enjoy the higher privileges afforded by the theological institution. President Willard and Professor Tappan, both of them able and learned divines, were constantly accessible for advice and assistance, in addition to the interesting public lectures of the latter, who was then also delivering his course upon the Jewish Antiquities."

Of Professor Tappan, the Rev. Dr. Pierce writes as follows:—

"You may know Mr. Channing's opinion of him by the fact that he had him to preach his ordination sermon. He was considered a moderate Calvinist, which the Rev. John Dippon of Taunton used to say 'is a contradiction in terms.' Dr. Tappan was as impartial a divine as I ever knew, extremely cautious not to prepossess the minds of his pupils, and always exhorting them to judge for themselves. It is well known that there was a strong mutual attachment between the professor and his distinguished pupil. Dr. Tappan was not only one of the most popular divines who entered our pulpits, but such men as George Cabot, Fisher Ames, Judge Lowell, did not hesitate to pronounce him one of the best preachers of the day."

A friend, who was much with Mr. Channing at the period of his life which we are now considering, has the impression that his time was more occupied in writing than in reading. And his remaining

papers give every reason to believe that he had already formed his peculiar habit of following out a train of thought pen in hand. Writing was with him, as he often said, the one great means of making clear to himself his own thoughts. New suggestions were noted; contradictory views placed side by side; qualifications and exceptions carefully stated under the admitted principles to which they referred; broad, general views given of whole subjects; particular conclusions succinctly recorded; and thus gradually, from a main root, a whole series of truths branched out and divided itself into its large classifications and minuter bearings. He early acquired these habits of methodical thinking; and all principles and facts grouped themselves into an order, which was the farthest possible from a mere mechanical arrangement, and which was ever unfolding under the organizing power of his spirit. This exactness of mind should be carefully heeded by all who would trace aright Mr. Channing's after progress as a theologian and a religious and social reformer. For what might often have seemed to those little acquainted with the laws of his inward nature like timidity or slowness was actually but the working of his unappeasable desire to obtain such a view of any subject as should have coherent wholeness in itself, and be in unity with other views which he regarded as established. Already he was thus cautiously and patiently investigating the great problems,—as to the Divine Being and Character,—Human Nature, its destiny and duties,—Christ and Christianity,—Society and its various relations,—to the solution of which his after-life was consecrated.

No authors probably aided him much in this travelling to give birth to great thoughts conceived by the spirit. But two writers were so often and so gratefully referred to by him—besides Hutcheson, Ferguson, and Price, whose influence has already been described—as to prove that they did something to determine at this period the current of his thoughts. The first, and by far the most useful to him, was Butler, whose “*Sermons on Human Nature*” he regarded as unsurpassed in English for clear, full, condensed thought, and to which may be traced, perhaps, the germs of some of his most important views. And the second was Law, whose mystic piety and earnest longing for spiritual perfection touched harmoniously many chords of his religious sympathy, although he felt that his temper was in other respects gloomy and narrow. He spoke with much regard, also, of Edwards, whose energy of intellect he greatly admired, while denying the soundness of his doctrine of necessity, and utterly rejecting its conclusions; many of whose writings he

thought suggestive of deeply interesting views of the spiritual relations between the Divine Being and man, while he was horror-struck at the theology of others ; and whose sketch of his conversion he once read in part to a friend, with a voice trembling in its tenderness and eyes softened with emotion, as being one of the most pathetic and beautiful sketches ever given of the deeper workings of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

His habits as a student may be partially illustrated by the following extracts from his private manuscripts of that period. They show the earnestness with which he was seeking to control his intellect and to direct it to the highest objects.

“It is easy to read, but hard to think. Without thinking, we cannot make the sentiments of others our own. Thinking alone adopts them into our family. It is my misfortune, that I have read much, but have reflected little. Let me reverse this order. I prefer strength of impression to superficial knowledge, however extensive.”

“We are very apt to think we have ideas, when we have only words. We mistake synonymes for definitions. I have often found rich ideas by analyzing words, particularly when they are metaphorical. Words should never be used in a loose sense. We are apt to be led astray by imperfect analogies, particularly in reasoning on the nature of Deity. It has been well observed, that, when beginning a subject, we should consider the degree of evidence to which we should yield our assent.”

“In pursuit of truth I should possess indefatigable patience and invincible perseverance. Have I not embraced errors to avoid the toil of inquiry? Let me read no enfeebling productions, but such poetry and works of fancy only as will tend to strengthen the purposes and elevate the feelings of my soul. I wish to acquire a calm energy, a strong principle of love and independence. Let me kindle a fire in my heart at the altars of religion, benevolence, and nature.”

“It is always best to think first for ourselves on any subject, and then to have recourse to others for the correction or improvement of our own sentiments. Thus we may reach truth, which we should never have observed had we caught a particular mode of thinking from any author. No principles should be received from education and habit merely. Let me observe, before perusing the opinions of observers. We check original thought by first learning how and what to think from others. The strength of others should

<sup>1</sup> Edwards's Works, Vol. I. p. 35.



be called in only to assist our weakness, not to prevent the exertion of our own powers. By means of this dependence on books, error, as well as truth, descends in hereditary succession. The sources of original thought are dried up, and the mind is overflowed by foreign streams derived through channels which other men have formed. Self-dependence in science is the road to useful truth. The quantity of knowledge thus gained may be less, but the quality will be superior. Truth received on authority, or acquired without labor, makes but a feeble impression."

"Whenever hypotheses are to be formed, let me first set down the facts on which they must be grounded, and weigh them carefully. It would be advisable to form a blank book merely for the insertion of those truths to which I assent; and it would be useful to revise whatever I have hitherto taken for granted, and judge it impartially. Let me beware lest a love of originality lead me astray. Ambition is as fatal as prejudice. Love of truth is the only principle which should influence us; and those truths which will have influence on life are alone worthy of present attention. I was born for action. My object is to do good to the world by promoting the cause of religion, as well as to advance myself in religion. A life of constant action and unwearied exertion excludes universal knowledge. The improvement of the heart is infinitely more important than the enlargement of the understanding. I hope for immortality in heaven, not immortal fame on earth. I therefore wish to have a few important truths impressed deeply on my mind, rather than to be lost in that chaos of universal knowledge which has hitherto distracted me. Knowledge is only a means. Let me not make it the end. Abstruse speculations on useless subjects will but waste my time."

"I must be very careful, lest, when my heart is warmed, I should be disposed to receive without examination the errors of enthusiasm for Christian truth. I fear that I am prejudiced in favor of some doctrines, and there is danger of my bending Scripture to my preconceived opinions. Let me always pray for impartiality, and strive to read without prejudice. I should also try to acquire a spirit of moderation from the Bible, instead of that narrowness of sentiment which is creeping upon me. Let me study Scripture without any ambitious views of striking out a new system, or of shining by ingenuity. Plain truth is worth far more than the splendid speculations of philosophical divines."

But already Mr. Channing's efforts were checked, and his spirits damped, by that state of half-health which did so much during the



whole of his early manhood to repress his native ardor and probably to overcast his firmament of thought, though it could never subdue his elastic will and truly heroic conscience. To his grandfather Ellery he thus describes his trials : —

“Perhaps it is fortunate for you that I have not written. A kind of stupefaction, of mental inactivity, has seized on me. A weight of dulness has oppressed all my faculties. My understanding and imagination have been buried under a cloud, my feelings deadened, and every spring of action relaxed. I feel but little interest in anything, and yet I am not at ease. This insensibility is morbid, the effect of disease, an unnatural state of the mind, a violence on its powers and energies. I do not act or feel, yet my sluggishness is not voluntary. I am hemmed in, — I am fettered. Like Enceladus, I groan under the mountain. I labor to remove it; but still, still it weighs on my breast, and seems to press heavier after every struggle. In fact, my late complaint has had more to do with the mind than the body, or rather the body has been affected in such a manner as peculiarly to affect the mind.”

Amidst this bodily and mental depression, making a path for himself between scepticism on the one side and a gloomy theology on the other, slowly winning his way to peace and light, delicately conscientious, eager for unobscured views, aspiring with the intense enthusiasm of a highly ideal temperament after perfect good, he found the refreshment he so much needed in the society of his elder brother, whose sweet, tender, glad, and poetic spirit formed with his a beautiful accord. Their leisure hours were passed together in most unreserved intimacy, while sometimes they followed the paths which wound through the then unbroken woods of Mount Auburn, or overlooked the wide panorama from Prospect Hill, and sometimes wore away the night beside the embers on their student's hearth. Then, and ever after, they stood in mutual relations of transparent confidence, and were united by that devoted friendship which, next after communion with the Divine Spirit, and the love of a true marriage, is the holiest tie in life. Francis thus writes : “A word of our dear William. You know not how happy I feel in such a brother. He is a bright light in the world; he illumines, he animates, he points the way.”

Near the close of his theological studies, Mr. Channing was admitted as “a member in full communion of the First Church of Christ in Cambridge,” which was at that time under the charge of the Rev. Dr. Abiel Holmes, who, in theology, was a “moderate Calvinist,” and as a man was highly respected for unpretending

piety and uprightness. The doctrinal opinions which he at this time entertained are embodied, though not very distinctly, in some articles of faith which he appears to have prepared for his own use. It would seem that his views were such as would then have been called Arian, but strongly tinged with opinions derived from Dr. Hopkins.

At this time, as through life, Mr. Channing kept aloof from sectarian entanglements, for by instinct he dreaded, as much as from principle he disapproved, all fetters upon free thought. But it certainly is not strange that one, holding such opinions as he has recorded, should have been supposed to have a leaning towards Orthodoxy, as from the following communication it appears was the case.

“He received the usual approbation to preach, I think,” says Dr. Pierce, “from the Cambridge Association. As there was then no Divinity School, and he was peculiarly cautious about committing himself on points of difference among Christians, as he was also supposed to be in familiar correspondence with his grandfather Ellery, who had the reputation of Orthodoxy of the Hopkins stamp, suspicions were entertained by some that he himself would enlist on that side. So thought some of the ministers composing the Association before which he appeared for approbation. For, as he himself told me, the only question proposed to him, after reading his sermon, was by Dr. Stearns of Lincoln, — ‘Whether he believed that God was the author of sin?’”

Any doubts as to the actual state of his opinions, however, are put at rest by his own testimony, as given in later years. “There was a time,” said he, “when I verged towards Calvinism, for ill health and depression gave me a dark view of things. But the doctrine of the Trinity held me back. When I was studying my profession, and religion was the subject of deepest personal concern with me, I followed Doddridge through his ‘Rise and Progress’ till he brought me to a prayer to Jesus Christ. There I stopped, and wrote to a friend that my spiritual guide was gone where I could not follow him. I was never in any sense a Trinitarian.”

Judge White thus confirms this statement: —

“In a conversation which I had with him, on our way to visit Dr. Osgood, of Medford, about the time he commenced preaching, he spoke of Dr. Hopkins with warm esteem, both as a friend and a theologian, dwelling with particular emphasis on the strong feature of benevolence which marked both his character and his divinity,

and observing very pointedly, that 'those who were called Hopkin-sians, and considered his followers, appeared to know little of him or of his true theological views.' With all his esteem for his friend Dr. Hopkins, he had no sympathy with these supposed followers, or with their leading opinions. His not manifesting an open and zealous concurrence with any particular sect or denomination, together with the deep seriousness of his religious impressions, might have given him something of an Orthodox reputation; but I am persuaded that he was neither more nor less entitled to it at that time than at any subsequent period of his life; for he was distinguished then, as ever afterwards, for his devotion to truth and for the spirit of free inquiry."

Mr. Channing began to preach in the autumn of 1802, being then in his twenty-third year.

"I find in my register for 1802," writes Judge White, "the following memorandum against October 24: 'Medford. Spent the Sunday and heard Brother Channing for the first time preach';—and I have even now a distinct recollection of our interview with Dr. Osgood, at his house, where we dined, and of the gratification I experienced at hearing him express the most decided approbation of the discourse, and speak of the young preacher's whole services and manner in the kindest terms of sympathy and commendation. Having been intimately acquainted with Dr. Osgood, and knowing how frankly he expressed his real opinion, I felt some solicitude till he had spoken, and was the more gratified by what he said. Yet he did not express himself so strongly as he did afterwards, in the absence of Mr. Channing. I know that he regarded him as a young preacher of extraordinary gifts, and of the highest promise in his profession. I mention this more particularly, having seen it erroneously stated in the 'Christian Register,' I think by an anonymous writer, that his early performance was not thus promising. My expectations, which had been high, were fully realized when I first heard him. There was the same charm in his sentiments and tones of voice which I ever after experienced from his preaching. Indeed, to me he always appeared essentially the same, though always advancing; and the chief difference between his early and later preaching seemed to arise from his greater freedom, energy, and earnestness, both of spirit and manner, as he advanced in his profound views of religion and humanity."

His preaching at once attracted attention for its fervor, solemnity, and beauty. The power of his look and tone, so expressive of a soul that overflowed with spiritual life, won the hearts of his hear-



ers, and was felt as evidence that he spoke with the authority of experience. A person who heard his first sermon, on the text, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee," in which he described the large range of benevolent action open to every human being, however situated, describes his manner as singularly "radiant and full of heavenly joy." The general admiration felt for his spirit and genius is proved by the fact that he was immediately asked to preach in Boston, Massachusetts, as a candidate for settlement, by the society in Brattle Street and by the society in Federal Street. The Rev. Dr. Thacher, pastor of the Brattle Street congregation, being quite infirm, was beginning to feel the need of a colleague; and the leading men among his people were exceedingly desirous that Mr. Channing should be elected to fill this office. They consulted with him freely in relation to the proposed arrangement, and gave him their assurance that he would receive the invitation of the society to become their associate pastor if he would once more preach before them. He returned to Newport to rest and recruit, however, without giving them a definite answer.

Meanwhile the society in Federal Street had been so strongly attracted towards Mr. Channing that they hastened at once to request him to settle with them, and deputed Deacon Francis Wright to wait upon him with the following "call": —

"BOSTON, December 29, 1802.

"DEAR SIR, — When a committee of the religious society in Federal Street lately made application to you to preach on probation, they were influenced not merely by their own united opinions, but by their persuasion of the dispositions and wishes of the society which they represented.

"It is gratifying to find that in this persuasion they were not mistaken, but that the society have received such satisfaction from your ministration among them, and have such a conviction of your character and accomplishments, that they were prepared for a more decisive expression of their approbation. At a full meeting of the society, holden on the 28th instant, they voted to invite you to become their pastor, and have assigned to us the grateful office of presenting to you their invitation. . . .

"We have thus the satisfaction to offer you the desires of a united people, and cannot but express a hope that this invitation and the proposals accompanying it will be acceptable to you. Such a result we shall consider as a blessing of Heaven on the society and its members, and all with whom they are tenderly connected.



“Any explanations or further communications from us, which may be considered necessary, we shall cheerfully offer on request; for this purpose a personal interview would be agreeable to us, but the distance and the season of the year would render it inconvenient for the committee to repair to Newport. If it should be convenient to you, before your proposed return to this vicinity, to be at Providence or Bristol, some of the committee would have the pleasure of meeting you at either of those places, at such time as you shall specify.

“In the name and behalf of the society, we remain,

“Respectfully, with great regard,

“Your friends and obedient servants,

“FRANCIS WRIGHT,

HENRY HUNTER,

THOMAS DAVIS,

JOHN DAVIS,

SIMON ELLIOT,

RUSSELL STURGIS,

EDWARD TUCKERMAN, JR.,

*Committee.*

“MR. WILLIAM E. CHANNING.”

Together with this call, Mr. Channing received persuasive appeals from many friends, advising him to preach again, as requested, at Brattle Street. But Dr. Thacher was now dead; and feeling that he was at once too ill and too inexperienced to discharge alone the duties in so large a congregation, and that the difficulties incident to the settlement of a colleague with him were great, he determined not to offer himself to that society as a candidate. In his letter he says:—

“I hope that I have not subjected your society to inconvenience by delaying to this period my answer to their application. A request of such importance required long deliberation. I have considered my decision as one which must seriously affect my whole future life. I have been unwilling, too, to determine without the counsel of my friends; and from a concurrence of opinion, I am constrained to decline the invitation of the church and congregation in Brattle Street to preach before them with a view to settlement.

“I have been for some time in a feeble state of health, and the labor of speaking in your house is so great that there would be danger of fatal injury. In so numerous a society, also, professional engagements would require great exertions, the fatigues of

which might unfit me for that attention to study on which my usefulness must very much depend. It is principally by impressing religious truth that a minister is instrumental in promoting the happiness of his people; and his own personal discipline is indispensably necessary to a faithful and effectual ministration of the word of God. Hence the importance, not only of health, but of much leisure, especially to one so young and inexperienced as myself. Could I, then, consistently with a regard to the prosperity of the church, and the eternal interests of my hearers, desire a situation which would require efforts disproportioned to my strength, and where the multiplicity of duties would allow but little opportunity for improvement?

“Your society, Sir, has much indeed to recommend it. But do not the very circumstances of your influence and numbers attach high responsibility to the office of your minister, and render experience, improved talents, and insight of character peculiarly necessary? A man of principle should first of all inquire whether he is capable of performing the duties he is called to undertake; and in calculating his powers he ought to guard against too high an estimation of them, lest he be led to engage in a sphere to which he is inadequate. My feelings, as well as my reason, recommend for me a more humble sphere; and I have a confidence that you will be no sufferers in consequence of the resolution which I have adopted.

“In thus declining the invitation of the church and congregation in Brattle Street, I am influenced by the highest respect for their character, and a sincere regard for their most important interests. And may God support and guide them by his grace and power!

“Under a grateful sense of the honor conferred on me by the society which you represent, I remain, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“W. E. CHANNING.”

This letter, otherwise unimportant, is inserted as illustrative of the caution with which its writer made up his judgment as to any course of conduct, though he was prompt and resolute in executing his purposes when formed. It shows, too, very clearly his humble estimate of his own abilities, and his conscientious desire to fit himself for efficient service in his vocation. Wisdom and moderation had already become his law.

Mr. Channing was the more inclined to settle at Federal Street, because, while the weakness of that society called out his sympathies, he was hopeful that his health would permit him to meet with fidelity the limited demand which would there be made upon him.

So, returning to Boston, he conferred with the committee of the society, and accepted their call in the following letter : —

*"To the Committee of the Religious Society in Federal Street.*

"GENTLEMEN, — I now address you to communicate my acceptance of the invitation of the society in Federal Street to settle with them as their minister. The character of the society, the favorable disposition they have expressed towards me, and the prospect of usefulness in a situation so well adapted to my present state of health, render this call peculiarly agreeable.

"The proposals you have communicated are entirely satisfactory ; and when I consider them as expressive of regard to religion, and originating in a desire to relieve your minister from solicitudes and embarrassments, I accede to them with pleasure. . . .

"In settling among you, I shall consider the prosperity of the society as my end and happiness. As an ambassador of Christ, I shall endeavor faithfully to declare those truths which he has revealed in his Word, and on which the purity of the church and the eternal interests of mankind depend.

"Though young and feeble, I am encouraged to form this solemn connection from a confidence in that candor and affection I have already experienced. I desire your prayers to Almighty God, that he would enable me to perform the important duties of my calling, and that my labors may not be in vain in the Lord.

"With great respect, I remain,

"Your sincere friend and obedient servant,

"WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

"BOSTON, February 12, 1803."

On Wednesday, June 1, 1803, Mr. Channing was ordained. The order of services was as follows : Introductory prayer by the Rev. Dr. Holmes, of Cambridge ; discourse by the Rev. Dr. Tappan, Professor at Harvard University ; prayer of consecration by the Rev. Dr. Osgood, of Medford ; charge by his uncle, the Rev. Henry Channing, of New London, who had declined preaching the sermon ; right hand of fellowship by his classmate and friend, the Rev. Joseph Tuckerman, of Chelsea.

One who was a devoted parishioner and a warm personal friend in after years, George Ticknor, Esq., has communicated the following sketch of this occasion : —

"My first recollection of Dr. Channing is on the day of his ordination. My father, who was one of the council, led me by the hand, as a small boy ; and I went with him in the procession, and sat

with him. So far as I now remember, I had never heard of the person to be ordained ; and I have still no recollection of anything in the services of the day, till they were about to be concluded. Then the pale, spiritual-looking young man, whose consecration I had witnessed without really understanding its purport, rose and announced the closing hymn. My attention was immediately fastened on him, and particularly on his visible emotion, when he came to the last stanza : —

‘ My tongue repeats her vows,  
Peace to this sacred house !  
For here my friends and brethren dwell ;  
And since my glorious God  
Makes thee his blest abode,  
My soul shall ever love thee well.’

His looks, the tones of his trembling voice, and the devout air with which he repeated rather than read these lines, are still present to me whenever the scene comes up in my thoughts ; and, in fact, at the time they so impressed the words themselves on my mind, that I have never forgotten them since. After the hymn had been sung, he rose once more, and in the same tender and devout manner pronounced a very simple benediction. In this, too, I see him still freshly before me, with his upcast eyes, and remember thinking how spiritual he was, and being sad that from his feeble appearance it did not seem as if he would live long.”

During the spring and summer, before and after his ordination, Mr. Channing resided at Brookline, in the family of Stephen Higginson, Jr., whose heart, overflowing with benevolence and hospitality, had taken the interests of the young minister under his paternal care, and who, together with his devout and excellent wife, — who, though orthodox in views, was liberal in spirit, — rejoiced in the saintly purity and rich intelligence of their friend. Here a large library and every convenience for study or relaxation were open to his use ; his bodily health was benefited by country air and free exercise amidst the picturesque landscapes of that most beautiful neighborhood ; and his affections found a home.



## PART SECOND.

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### CHAPTER I. — EARLY MINISTRY.

ÆT. 23-34. 1803-1814.

IT was in his twenty-fourth year that Mr. Channing entered upon his ministerial course in Boston, already fitted by the discipline of life and inward experience to sympathize in the movements of the time and place in which his lot was cast, and destined to lend them efficient aid. But before tracing his relations to that development of spirituality, liberty, love, which it was the mission of his age to promote, let us first observe his growth toward the stature of a perfect man in his closet and home circle, in his parish and immediate neighborhood. Thus shall we follow down the stream from its mountain springs, which were fed by the rains of heaven.

The family of an estimable parishioner, with whom Mr. Channing at first resided, remember him at that period as serious in deportment to a degree that was even oppressive. He had the air of one absorbed in his own contemplations, and looked careworn, weary, and anxious. Society seemed distasteful; he joined but little in conversation; took his meals in haste; was retired in his ways; lived mostly in his study; appeared rather annoyed than pleased with visitors; seldom went abroad, — declining, when possible, all invitations; and, in a word, was most content when left uninterruptedly to himself. There was sweetness in his looks and words, however; solemn counsels were gently given, and an atmosphere of holiness threw a winning charm over his conversation and conduct. Undoubtedly, this reserve, the shade of which was deepest in his first entrance upon his duties, and which cleared away as he became more confirmed in goodness and wisdom, was partly owing to his habit of fastening attention upon any subject that interested him, and of brooding over it even while in society and in action, — a fault in his regard, of which he early became aware, and which he endeavored through his later life to check. In his journals he frequently thus refers to it: —

“A subject has been very injurious to me. It has shut me up in my room till my body has been exhausted, and has led to neglect of my people and family. I must be moderate in everything.”

“It will often be useful to fix the number of hours during which I will attend to a subject, and rigidly to adhere to the determination.”

“My mode of study destroys me, my health, my piety, my social feelings; and is therefore sinful.”

“My long absorption in a subject enfeebles my mind, prevents its free action, casts a cloud over my thoughts, produces a painful anxiety.”

“My speculations about the origin of moral feelings, &c., cannot justify a practical neglect of them.”

“No subject can be usefully continued beyond a certain time. The mind needs to be recruited. All the motives which impel me to pursue the subject require me to disengage my mind for a season.”

“The attainment of truth requires me to be able to continue in a state of doubt until I have had time to examine all the arguments which relate to a point; and this examination, however protracted, if conducted by a love of truth, is virtuous, — approved by conscience and God, — the improvement of my best powers, — an approximation towards God.”

“The wretchedness I have suffered on so many topics shows the importance of limiting the period of attention.”

“Because doubt spreads itself over one subject I ought not to doubt of all. This will lead to misery. A narrow mind cannot see the connections between many propositions which are yet supported by sufficient proofs.”

“My sleep has been broken by anxiety at not discovering truth.”

“Let it be my rule never to carry a subject with me into society. My social duties are in this way neglected.”

But his serious manner was chiefly to be traced to profound conscientiousness. Without the elastic spirits which a vigorous tone of body gives, as a power of reaction for the spirit, he bent beneath a feeling of unfitness for the duties of his vocation. To a young friend who was just entering upon the ministry, and who was oppressed by a like sense of responsibility, he once said: “Take courage. I suffered as you now do. In the early years of my ministry, ill health and a deep consciousness of unworthiness took away my energy and hope, and I had almost resolved to quit my profession. My brother Francis begged me to persevere, to

make a fairer trial; and to his influence I owe very much\* the continuance of labors which, I hope, have not been useless to myself or to others."

A letter written at this time to his uncle Henry well shows how deep his depression was:—

"I have no right to complain of the trials of my ministry. They are small, compared with what thousands of my brethren are called to endure. I can complain of nothing but myself. Every day teaches me more of my weakness and corruption, and yet I seem to grow no better. I hope my hearers are more profited by my discourses than I am, or I shall do little good. I can only hope that God designs to humble me, to make me feel my insufficiency, that he may lead me to ascribe the success of my labors to his blessing, whenever he may please to make them powerful to the salvation of souls."

His painful struggles, and his mode of triumphing over his weakness, are pointed out yet more fully in a letter written many years later to a young brother who had sought his advice:—

"I have passed through too much of your sad experience, to be able to treat it harshly. My own mind has often been ready to sink under like burdens. A merciful Power has sustained me, and I trust that it will sustain you. It is impossible that a man who is at all alive to his moral and religious obligations should enter on the ministry without many solitudes, fears, and painful convictions of his distance from the perfection he is to teach. It is impossible for a young man, especially if he has been retired in his habits, to appear in a pulpit,—one of the most conspicuous spots on earth,—and to escape all consciousness of himself, and give himself up with an undivided heart to a work to which he is new, and to which his feelings have been but imperfectly trained. The strongest of all passions, ambition, cannot at once be put to silence, and its inconsistency with the spirit of Christianity and the ministry produces keen self-reproach.

"I tell you here what I suppose all ministers could tell, and I see not how the evil is to be avoided under the present constitution of things. God might have committed his word to the ministry of angels, but this he has not seen fit to do; he intrusts it to earthen vessels, to frail men, to those who need moral and religious education as truly as their hearers, who reprove themselves in the reproofs they administer to others, and who are to carry others forward by advancing themselves. A deep sense of imperfection and much spiritual conflict are, then, inseparable from the work.

“Your defects do not at all discourage me. I could tell of those who have struggled through the same. I do not mean to deny their existence. The only question is, Do you thirst to be improved? Do you thirst for a generous interest in your fellow-creatures? Do you desire a new power to do good? Have you the principle of progress in you? Of this I cannot doubt, nor can you. That you are not doomed to stop forever where you are, I know. God is giving you power in your moral nature, in Christianity, in his Holy Spirit, against selfishness, apathy, and corrupt ambition. These can be overcome, and must be, and I know not a vocation in which you can withstand them so effectually as in the ministry. The very pains you have suffered, if they do not palsy you by taking away the hope of change and progress, will do you good. They show you that you are not spiritually dead. They should satisfy you that you have the foundation of great ministerial usefulness. Set yourself to work with new earnestness for your own improvement, and seek to improve yourself, not only for your own sake, but that you may more effectually improve and quicken your fellow-creatures, and God will crown your labors with success.

“What you need, what all need, is determined self-denial. You need to lay on yourself severe rules as to the distribution of time, social intercourse, &c. You need force of purpose, hardiness, and resolution. This is a much deeper evil than selfishness or coldness. You have been brought up, perhaps, too delicately, and are paying the penalty of having faced so few storms. You have not yet learned to will with that energy and fearlessness to which so many difficulties yield. Do you ask how this force is to be gained? We know that exposure, exertion, and conflict with difficulties do much to give tone to the body, and so they do to the mind. The revolving of elevating thoughts in our closet does little for us. We must bring them home to the mind in the midst of action and difficulty. I cannot, then, consent that you should yield to your first serious trial in life. Resolve on the acquisition of moral energy, — the greatest of acquisitions, — and, as far as you can command circumstances, place yourself where it may be won most effectually. I would not expose you very freely at first, any more than I would carry the invalid from his warm room into a piercing atmosphere. But take on yourself some good work, and determine to carry it through, whether hard or easy, painful or pleasant, to the extent of your power. I care little where you preach, if you find a sphere which will give a more manly tone to your mind, and inure you to wrestle with difficulties. I do not fear, nor must you. God bless you!”



In relation to the trials of young ministers, he once also said: "You must not expect too much from your minister, especially at first. If he have sensibility, he will suffer enough from the consciousness of deficiency, without being reminded of it from abroad. I cannot describe to you the load which weighed down my mind at the beginning of my ministry."

How far he was then wrapped about by chill morning fogs, which for a time, but only for a time, shut out the sunshine of God's all-embracing joy, appears also from the following description of his early experience:—

"You tell me your faith was the faith of happiness. This is never the surest. Fortunately, mine grew up under a dark sky, and the light has been increasing to this day. My passion for happiness spent itself in my youth in reverie. I never thought of realizing the vision on earth, and yet it has, in an humble manner, been realized. My faith in God, schooled by trial, looked to him first and almost exclusively for virtue, for deliverance from the great evil of sin, which I early felt to be the only true evil. The consciousness of unworthiness repressed all hopes of immediate happiness, gave me a profound conviction of the *justice* of my suffering, turned all my reproaches from Providence on myself, and not only made me incapable of murmuring, but taught me gratitude for the discipline of life. How often, in disappointment, has my first utterance been thanks to the Purifier of the soul!

"Thus my faith has never for a moment been shaken by suffering. The consciousness of unworthiness, of falling so far below my idea of duty, a feeling which hardly forsakes me, has helped much to reconcile me to outward evil. It has taken the sting from human reproach. In listening to the inward reprover, I have cared little for human opinion, and have found too much truth in censure to be much displeased with any but myself. Accordingly, my religion has taken very much one form: I think of God as the Father, from whose power and love I may seek and hope for myself and others the unutterable and only good, — that of deliverance from all inward evil, of perfect, unspotted goodness, of spiritual life now and forever.

"I have talked of myself, for, after all, our experience is the best lesson we can give to others. Your nature differs. You have had an impatient thirst for immediate happiness, which my early history, and perhaps my mental constitution, forbade me. Happiness has come to me almost as a surprise, without plan or anticipation. You have grasped at it as almost your lawful inheritance, and had almost a feeling of wrong at disappointment."

Thus all proves that he was at this time concentrated in his own soul, and seeking there to gain the unity with God which is salvation. His private papers, especially, show how intently he was striving to subdue evil, to shun temptation, and to give freest room to pure and holy thoughts. Such memorials are sacred, and should be used as under the eye of the spirit which wrote these records of its pilgrimage, and now has outgrown and dropped its mortal form. But it may encourage sinking hearts to know that this good man was tried as they are, and agonized his way to peace. And some few hints are therefore given from his journals. They cannot, indeed, be rightly omitted, in describing one who was so bright an instance of moral victory. These papers most abound in the first years of his ministry, though the habits then formed remained strong through life. They manifest unvarying self-scrutiny, and prove by what toil his character and mind were formed. A tone of self-depreciation runs through them, — so eager is he to detect the most subtle workings of sin, to expel it, and to guard against its return. They reveal an incessant warfare, not with great evils, but with small ones, — with the remnants of evil lurking in the outskirts of his nature. It was by elaborate analysis of his own tendencies, and unfaltering aspiration to the perfect, that he sought to mould himself to a symmetrical goodness.

The headings of these papers are various: such as “Ends,” “Permanent Objects,” “Promises,” “Practicable Excellence,” “Improvements required,” “Relations,” “Domestic Reforms,” “System,” “Subjects of Meditation,” “Heart, Character,” “Rules of Life,” “Directory and Review,” &c. It is noticeable in them, that intellect and affections are subjected to the same rigid discipline. Their pervading trait is devoutness.

“How do I deserve to be removed from my labors, — I who labor so poorly, and with such low motives! The honor of my work I have forfeited. Let me humble myself before God, and pray for restoration to his service.”

“How continually selfishness breaks forth! It must be resisted perpetually. Let nothing be spoken or done to display self; but let simple love be the spring. Do I know what such love will rise to, if cultivated?”

“Let me, when in society with those who differ from me, feel the importance of sincerity and independence. Let me consider that virtue is infinitely more important than their good opinion. Let me leave to God the impression which I make, when I frankly express feelings and opinions. Let me remember that ultimately the friendship of the good will be secured by the discharge of duty.”

"In conversation, let me feel that I shall gain more by candor than by victory."

"Let me cherish frankness by thinking of the nobleness of the quality. Restraint prevents expressions of affection, makes society painful, chills the heart."

"Eternal life is holy life, — the exercise of *love* to God and all beings."

"We must be babes, if we would have God revealed to us; must feel the weakness, ignorance, helplessness, dependence, wants, of little children. We must become fools, and see that we know nothing. We must hunger and thirst, and feel a void, as having nothing. Am I a babe? Do I sit low?"

"Attain a single, simple heart. Never speak to God or man without desiring the end I profess. Let me beware of formality in discharging religious duties. Let prayer, conversation, preaching, all flow from the heart. Let me first feel the force of truth myself, and then impress it upon others. Let me feel the force of every truth and every argument with which I am conversant. Let me be not learned, but *wise*."

"Let me apply to my most painful, humble duties first and most attentively."

"Let me continually engage in labors enjoined by God, and with the ends and temper he requires, and feel a *perfect confidence* in him for support. Let my whole life be a leaning upon God."

"Let me place duty on the ground of privilege, and consider every opportunity of employing time usefully a favor; and ask only, *What is duty?* in every state."

"When any particular sin recurs to my mind, let me connect it with an act of humiliation before God, so that even sin shall lead to a communion with God."

"Let me decide upon the quantity and extent of any pleasure which is right, before indulging in it, so as to avoid all painful balancing of mind. Let every meal be an exercise of self-government; eating considerably, and recalling its designed end."

"Let me live in continual preparation for prayer, in such a state of mind that I may immediately engage in it."

"Let one hour after dinner each day be given to intercession, to meditating upon and devising good, and as much of the afternoon as is necessary to accomplishing it."

"In conversation, let me draw persons from evil speaking and contention, and painful or injurious subjects, by catching some thought suggested, and making it the ground of remark."

"Let me strive to connect every personal enjoyment with acts

of kindness to my neighbor. Whenever I enjoy, let me ask, How can I impart and diffuse this happiness? and let me make every pleasure a bond of friendship, a ground of communion, and esteem it chiefly on this account. When I suffer, let me ask, How can I relieve similar suffering, wherever it exists? and so quicken sympathy and improve experience."

"When I have any portion of time not devoted to any particular purpose, let me ask, Can I not spend it with God? Let me seize it as a peculiarly privileged season."

"Religious exercises are God's armor to defend us, the means of grace, support, and glory. Hence union with Christ is a ground of fruitfulness. Christ is all-important to us as a substantial, steady exhibition of virtue, not fleeting or unsubstantial."

"Have access to God, as if introduced to his presence. Seek God; seek the sight of him; *observe him in all things*."

"Let me every day give away something, and daily deny myself something, that I may have more to give."

"Be very careful to open and close the day with devotion. Pray before going to meals, or entering society, or engaging in study and composition. On Sunday, let me preach over to myself the sermon, and pray for its success, before I go to the desk; read works of sober devotion till the exercises of the day are over; after service, consider how far I have been faithful and conducted as a minister should; after supper, retire to examine, humble, and devote myself; and until bed-time, reflect upon the character and love of the Redeemer."

"I wish to gain a *calm energy*, a strong principle of love and independence."

"I wish to gain *clearness of conception*, a distinct and simple mode of considering objects. I should be careful at first to separate from a subject everything foreign to it, and place it in as clear a light as possible."

"Amidst the multitude of objects perceived and remembered, there must be selection. Great objects make great minds. Hence God, eternity, heaven, the kingdom of Christ, the perfection of the world, our highest good, — these should be our *objects*."

"To perceive the *true end* of existence, and the *means* to that end, is to improve the mind. We have a complex end, yet a harmonious one. The glory and kingdom of God, the holiness and happiness of mankind, our own eternal good, — these conspire."

"A wise man seeks to shine in himself; a fool to outshine others. The former is humbled by a sense of his infirmities; the latter is lifted up by the discovery of the faults of others. The wise man



considers what he wants; the fool what he abounds in. The wise man is happy in his own approbation; the fool, in the applause of his fellows."

"We should desire to have every idea connected in our minds, as its object is in nature, so that a clear view of it shall arise before us. *Distinct conception* is important. Wide views of beings and events should be desired. We should seek to see all things in their just extent, clearly, forcibly. All thoughts which they suggest should *be connected in their natural order, be grasped at once, so as to form a complete view.*"

"Everything may be viewed as a sign of God's will and character; and our thoughts, after tracing an object, should at length ascend to this all-important end, — Should I be sluggish in such a world as this?"

"The perfection of mind is to have a propensity to seek agreeable and interesting objects, to have attention turn spontaneously to beauties of nature, excellences of human character, God's perfections. A mind thus filled is always improving, always happy. A mind which turns to disagreeable things, party agitations, future uncertainties, &c., must be depraved. All objects may be viewed as expressions of goodness."

"How to keep the mind open to every source of enjoyment, to the *little pleasures* which surround us? There is a possibility of laboring too hard for this. We generally get so far absorbed in some care, as to become insensible to the *variety* of pleasing objects. Is there not an easy, disengaged state of mind very favorable to a succession of minute enjoyments? There is sometimes an exhilaration of mind which throws a glory over every object, and seems to give new sensibility to every taste."

"He is miserable who makes pleasure his business. God designs us for activity, pursuit of ends, — efficiency. Action originating in God, and attended with the consciousness of his favor, is the highest source of enjoyment. Every pleasure should be an expression of God's pleasure, and should bind us to those around us. Does not this state of mind invite pleasures of every description? Does it not open our eyes to all varieties of good?"

"Is it not possible to allow no unpleasant objects to dwell upon our minds any longer than we can derive benefit from them? May we not bring our sensibilities to pain very much under our own control, and use them only for discipline? How should every opportunity be seized for *invigorating* our minds and active powers, perseverance, firmness, fortitude, application, so that energetic, successful, unwearied labor may be the result!"

His inward state is with like simplicity made manifest in papers of a devotional character, written apparently in part for his own private use, in part as preparative for the family altar and the pulpit. The tone of his piety, pervading as it did all thought and action, may be best understood from a few extracts.

“O God! the Centre of all pure spirits, the Everlasting Goodness, we come to thee. Thou art the happiness of heaven; and thy presence, felt by the soul that communes with thee, is the highest good. Ignorant of thee, we know nothing aright; wandering from thee, we lose all light and peace; forgetting thee, we turn our minds from the noblest object of thought; and without love to thee, we are separated from infinite loveliness, and from the only substantial and sufficient source of joy. Thou hast an inexhaustible fulness of life; and thine unceasing communications take nothing from thy power to bless. Thou art infinitely better than all thy gifts, and through all we desire to rise to thee.”

“We thank thee for the proofs thou givest of thy essential, pure, and perfect benignity, so that through all clouds and darkness we can see a gracious Father. In this world of shadows, this fleeting tide of things, this life of dreams, we rejoice that there is a Reality, sure, unchanging, in which we may find rest; that there is a Power which can cleanse us from all sin, raise us to all virtue and happiness, and give us endless growth. How great is our privilege, that we have such an object for our hope and trust,—that our souls may contemplate infinite loveliness, greatness, goodness,—that we may at all times commune with the Best of Beings!”

“For thy inviolable faithfulness, thy impartial justice, thy unerring wisdom, thy unfathomable counsels, thy unwearied care, thy tender mercy, thy resistless power, we adore thee. For the splendor spread over all thy works, and still more for the higher beauty of the soul, of which the brightness of creation is but the emblem and faint shadow, we thank thee. O, let thy love affect our hearts, let us feel its reality, constancy, tenderness! To thee we owe all. Thine is the health of our bodies, the light of our minds, the warmth of affection, the guiding voice of conscience. Whatever knowledge of virtuous impressions we have derived from the society of friends, the conversation of the wise and good, the care of instructors, the researches of past ages, we desire to trace gratefully to thee. We rejoice that we depend on thee, the Father of Spirits, whose requisitions are so reasonable, whose government is so mild, whose influences are so ennobling. How unspeakably

great is thy goodness ! And all our other blessings are as nothing, when compared with the sublime, pure, infinite glory to which we are called by the gospel of thy Son."

"We are infinitely honored in being under thy protection, and having all our affairs overruled by thy providence. We thank thee for every good influence imparted to our minds, for every holy aspiration, every motive of conscience ; for the countless materials of happiness, and our power over nature ; for the light which thou hast thrown upon the darkness of life's trials ; for the success with which thou hast crowned the labors of reflecting men in exploring thy works ; for the blessings of civilization and knowledge ; for our capacities of improvement ; for our domestic relations, and for their influence in softening and improving our nature ; for all the wisdom, purity, love, communicated to the human race ; for the illustrious examples thou hast raised up, in successive ages, of enlightened piety and disinterested virtue : for the influence which eminent men have exerted, for the splendor they have shed on human nature, for the encouragement of their example in the pursuit of excellence ; and, above all, for our redemption by Jesus Christ, the privilege of access to thee, the hope of pardon, the influences of thy spirit, the prospect of immortality."

"We thank thee, that thou hast set us in families, in neighborhoods, in communities ; that thou hast made of one blood all men, thus uniting us in and by a common nature to the whole human race, and giving us means, motives, and opportunities to exercise a continually extending love. We thank thee for Jesus Christ ; that he came, not to bless one people or one age, but all nations and times ; that he came to establish such a religion, to seal such a covenant ; that he came to be a bright manifestation of God, to give everlasting happiness. For a Saviour so excellent, so suited to our wants, so fitted to awaken our love, to inspire holy and delightful attachment, to call out our whole hearts, we thank thee. We bless thee that man's sins have served to manifest and glorify thy mercy, to show forth thine essential, inexhaustible goodness, so that our unworthiness has formed a new ground for love and thankfulness to thee."

"May Christ be precious to us ; teach us his worth, his glory, so that we may love him and rejoice in him with joy unspeakable. May a sense of the greatness of the evils from which he came to deliver, and of the blessings which he can bestow, excite our sensibility, gratitude, desire, and lead our minds to dwell on him. Let sin be our greatest burden ; may all life's ills seem light in com-

parison with it ; may we groan for deliverance from it, and be more earnest in resisting it than in resisting all other evils ; and may we welcome Christ as our saviour from it."

"Communicate and quicken spiritual life. May our souls be warm with life. Save us from an inanimate and sluggish state. Teach us thy purity, how great thy abhorrence of evil, how irreconcilable thy hatred of it, and may we all partake of the same abhorrence of sin. Increase our sensibility to evil ; may we shun every appearance of it and repel the first temptation ; and in a world where example is so corrupt, we beseech thee to arm us with a holy fortitude."

"Inspire us with a generous love of virtue, of rectitude, of holiness. May we prefer it even to life. Animate us to adhere to good in every danger. May nothing on earth move us or shake our steadfastness. Increase our sensibility to good ; may we see more and more its loveliness and beauty."

"Animate us to cheerfulness. May we have a joyful sense of our blessings, learn to look on the bright circumstances of our lot, and maintain a perpetual contentedness under thy allotments. Fortify our minds against disappointment and calamity. Preserve us from despondency, from yielding to dejection. Teach us that no evil is intolerable but a guilty conscience, and that nothing can hurt us, if with true loyalty of affection we keep thy commandments and take refuge in thee."

"May every day add brightness and energy to our conceptions of thy lovely and glorious character. Give us a deeper sense of thy presence, and instruct us to nourish our devoutness by every scene of nature and every event of providence. Assist us to consecrate our whole being and existence to thee, our understandings to the knowledge of thy character, our hearts to the veneration and love of thy perfections, our wills to the choice of thy commands, our active energies to the accomplishment of thy purposes, our lives to thy glory, and every power to the imitation of thy goodness. Be thou the centre, life, and sovereign of our souls."

Thus earnestly was Mr. Channing seeking perfect peace and unclouded light. He believed, and acted on the faith, that only the purity of heart which is blessed by seeing God can fit a man to be the spiritual teacher of his fellows ; and as the condition for usefulness, he opened his inmost will to receive the Divine life of love. It certainly is not surprising that a nature so sensitive and tender,



especially when compelled to undue action by ill health, should have manifested its struggles in a somewhat austere gravity of manner. But water gains crystal clearness by percolating the sands; and the very severity of his self-discipline gave sweetness more and more to his social intercourse.

For the first few months after his settlement, Mr. Channing lived, as we have seen, with some parishioners and friends. But even their devoted kindness could not fill the void in his affections; and in a letter to his sister Ann, to whom he was most fondly attached, we find him writing, "I am sad; my sister, come and cheer me." It was soon in his power, however, to gratify this desire for domestic love by removing his mother and the family to Boston. His brother Francis and he had long since agreed, that, for the end of insuring their ability to aid their mother and her other children, one of them should remain unmarried for at least ten years; and as his salary was a more certain income than his brother's professional gains, who, though rapidly rising to distinction as a lawyer, was not yet established in lucrative business, he now took it upon himself to fulfil the arrangement. So he wrote to his mother that he had a parsonage which he could not occupy, and fuel which he could not burn; and that she would save him much waste and trouble by turning them to good use. He well knew that she could not afford to leave her house and large garden at Newport, without such an addition to her means as he thus placed at her disposal; but he chose to represent himself as the person obliged, by pleading his need of her guardianship. She yielded to his affectionate appeal, and in a short time he had the satisfaction of seeing the home circle gathered round him, beneath his own roof, blessed by his bounty, and enjoying the best opportunities for happiness and improvement.

The tact with which he sought to conceal — even from himself, if it might be — his kindness, proved its temper. His father had left so small a property, that it was quite inadequate to the support and education of the growing family; and by surrendering for their use the greater part of his salary, William changed their condition from that of want to one of competence. But while thus supplying them with the means of comfort and culture, his words and acts rather tended to give the impression that they were nowise dependent upon him, but only on the family estate. Without, of course, employing deception, he yet was sedulous to keep from the partakers of his benefits the knowledge that he was their benefactor. "I was often amused, and still oftener filled with veneration," writes a brother, "by the mode in which he talked of the necessity

of punctually paying his board to our mother, and placed his funds in her hands, as he said, for safe keeping, withdrawing only such trifling sums as he absolutely needed." All extra fees were given, as their rightful perquisite, to his sisters; and as years passed on, and the wants and desires of the various members of the family unfolded, each day but gave new proofs of his ever thoughtful, ever delicate affection. His outlays for them, in addition to his large charities abroad, were so considerable, that, though his salary was for those times ample, being at first twelve hundred, and afterwards fifteen hundred dollars, he never laid up a cent, and was often wholly destitute. "Well do I remember," said one of his near relatives, "how pained he was at the time of my marriage, when he wished to make me a wedding present, and had but fifty dollars to give. He could not help then telling me how poor he was." Thus, for ten years and more, did he faithfully redeem the first words spoken to his mother after his ordination, when she said, "Now, William, I must give you up!" "O, no!" he replied, "you shall never find that the duties of the Christian minister are inconsistent with those of the son."

A slight sketch of his constant little sacrifices in the petty details of life may most clearly show how he appeared to those who lived with him in the nearest relations, and who knew him best. He had always been strict in his habits of self-denial, in food, dress, and every mode of expenditure; but he was now more simple than ever, and seemed to have become incapable of any form of self-indulgence. He took the smallest room in the house for his study, though he might easily have commanded one more light, airy, and in every way more suitable; and chose for his sleeping-chamber an attic, which he shared with a younger brother. The furniture of the latter might have answered for the cell of an anchorite, and consisted of a hard mattress on a cot-bedstead, plain wooden chairs and table, with matting on the floor. It was without fire, and so cold he was through life extremely sensitive; but he never complained, or appeared in any way to be conscious of inconvenience. In illness only would he change for the time his apartment, and accept a few comforts. The dress, too, that he habitually adopted, was of inferior quality; and garments were constantly worn which the world would call mean, though an almost feminine neatness preserved him from the least appearance of personal neglect. The only luxury he would indulge himself in was annually to lay out a small sum in increasing his scanty library. "Never did I know him to be guilty of a selfish act," testifies his brother; "and he shrank from any mention of his incessant kindness, as if the least allusion to it

gave him pain." These few mementos are, indeed, quite unpretending; but their very humbleness may serve to show how vital was the root of love from which such ever fresh disinterestedness bloomed forth.

A few further extracts from his journals will exhibit how his social affections were trained to an unreserved loyalty to conscience.

"Let me pay peculiar attention to family prayer, to make Scripture interesting and prayer solemn. Let me pray for them in secret daily. Let me attend to their reading, improve their minds. Let me attend to the religion of the domestics, and give them equal privileges with the rest on the Sabbath and in the family exercises. Let me regard the wants of all, and live sacrificing my own will and desires to theirs, abounding in affectionate services, and remembering them always as those whom God has pointed out to me as my peculiar objects.

"Let me endeavor to interest all in good pursuits, continually propose kind ends, make active benevolence their spring, and excite them to a course of pious, loving life.

"Let me in conversation avoid finding fault, satire, severity; let me express the spirit and power, rather than the speculations, of divinity; let me communicate liberally whatever knowledge I acquire, and raise our social intercourse.

"Let me encourage and share innocent pleasures, contribute all in my power to their happiness, make them feel my affection, and convince them that love, not bigoted severity, leads to my cautious and solemn admonition.

"Let me cultivate harmony and mutual affection, strive to make home interesting from peace and love and mutual interest and regard.

"Encourage private prayer morning and evening among them.

"Let me promote unity of sentiment, especially on religious and most interesting subjects.

"Let me live with them as immortal beings, and have in view the end of present existence.

"In the morning, when I see any of my friends after the night's separation, let me receive them as new gifts from God, as raised from the dead.

"My mother has been quite ill. I have never seen her so much reduced. For a day or two my fears were not a little excited. I felt more sensibly than I ever did before, that this nearest, best, of earthly friends was mortal. Thanks to a merciful Providence, she is regaining her strength. It is a pleasing consideration, that her



children have been able to repay a little of her kindness ; but how little can parental kindness be requited ! ”

That his sense of duty was at this time even tyrannical, Mr. Channing recognized in later life, and regretted that this stern nurse had cramped the action of his native impulses by too close swathing ; but he had not then learned that the true art of moral culture is to balance extravagant tendencies by quickening those which are languid, and that growth is a safer means of harmony in character than repression. He painfully felt, too, that his solemnity repelled those whom he longed to win, and cast a shade over the circle he would have rejoiced to brighten. And, indeed, had it not been for his greatness of heart, dignity, assiduous affection, and evidently lofty aims, his constant staidness of deportment would have been irksome. For the other members of the family presented in manners an amusing contrast to this beloved friend, whom, highly as they honored him, it was not in their will to imitate. The mother, as we have seen, had inherited from her father a vivacious temper, keen perceptions, a wit as sharp as it was droll, and a sincerity of thought and speech, which made light of conventionalities, and swept away respectable pretences like cobwebs. Her sallies, given out in the plainest Anglo-Saxon, sometimes sounded strangely as a response to her son's guarded words, especially when the characters of others, or passing events, were under discussion. And the hilarity of the younger brothers and sisters would have jarred in discord with his taciturn ways, had not his considerateness been so genuine. Self-possessed in the midst of them, however, he allayed all differences, and melted them into one. He devoted himself also to the culture of his sisters, read and conversed with them at certain portions of the day, was watchful over their manners, and as they came forward in life schooled himself to leave behind the student's gown, and accompanied them into the delightful circles which the influence of his talents opened to the members of his household. In the friendly groups, too, which his mother's hospitable and genial temper gathered round her fireside, he endeavored to act his part. But it was plain that he was not at home in festive scenes of any kind. His conversation was at all times and in all places connected, grave, and on themes of high interest. He could not unbend. And intent as he was on subjects which absorbed his whole spiritual energy, he actually had neither inclination nor even the sense of liberty to relax. In a word, he was striving forever to press onward and upward ; and chiefly longed to bear those whom he loved with him in his ascent.



But though thus serious, he was most loving. His gentleness of character showed itself in all social relations. If controversies and warm debates arose, he had the skill to smooth the storm by soft words and calm looks. If scandal was introduced, he changed the topic; and if any one's reputation was attacked, he would say, with quiet firmness, "Pray, stop! for if you continue these remarks, I shall feel bound to repeat every word to the person of whom you are speaking." The effect was to stifle all desire of crimination. The same disposition appeared in his liberality towards those who differed in religious opinions. "William is no Quaker, you see," said his mother one day to a friend, with whom he was pleasantly talking upon their opposite views. "No," answered he; "and E—— did not expect to find me one; but there is a common ground of Christian feeling, where, without distinction of name, we can unite in belief, that the sincere worshippers of God are the accepted of God."

As another illustration, this little incident may be mentioned. Busy in studies, in visits among his parish, and in charitable movements, or calls on the sick and needy, the week passed away, and left him on Saturday usually unprepared. A colored teacher, who was occupied in his school duties on other days, but who was anxious to improve himself by Mr. Channing's society, took occasion on the leisure afternoon to visit him, and frequently prolonged his stay into the evening. The mother was greatly annoyed at seeing her son's last precious hours thus broken in upon. But though it obliged him oftentimes to sit up late in the night, and to finish his sermons while the morning bell was ringing, he would never allow his colored friend to be denied.

Generosity pervaded his conduct. To the erring he was consistently forbearing. Two instances may show this trait. A domestic, in whom the family placed confidence, professed "to be converted to religion," at some revival in the society to which she belonged, and was very strict in her devotions and attendance at meeting. The members of the family soon detected her, however, in the commission of indiscriminate petty thefts. When accused, she was highly indignant at being suspected; but as the property was found in her possession, her hypocrisy was clear. Mr. Channing did nothing in relation to the affair but to converse with her, giving her the most earnest counsel in his power, and then allowed her to depart. He expressed for her only the deepest pity; mentioning as his reason, that "she had been brought up in an almshouse, and had received no good influences in early life." The amount taken was quite large; but he considered it wrong to inflict a legal pen-

alty upon one whom society had so neglected ; and, if he had followed his own inclination, would have kept her in his service, and have sought to reclaim her. On another occasion, though at a somewhat later period of life, he rented a place in the country for the summer, with the obligation on his part of keeping it in order. The gardener whom he hired, however, proved faithless, sold the valuable vegetables and fruits, and injured the grounds and trees by his carelessness, leaving the loss to fall on his employer. The man became ill, and for the end of encouraging him to reform, Mr. Channing paid him his full wages, and, after exposing to him the baseness of his conduct, gave him his best advice, and pardoned the offence.

The distaste for social enjoyments, which has been noticed, doubtless was increased by Mr. Channing's poor state of health ; for lassitude followed all exertion, and physical depression cast a chill upon a naturally glowing temper. And for the end of enabling all to discriminate between the essential man and the accidents of his organization, it seems necessary to set this fact of his chronic debility in a distinct light. In our present ignorance of the relations of body to spirit, indeed, we can never decide how far morbid action in either is a cause or an effect ; but their mutual dependence is plain enough. It needs only to be said, then, that from the time of his residence at Richmond till his death, he never knew a day of unimpaired vigor. The common services of the pulpit prostrated him ; unusual efforts brought fever, alternating with dulness ; earnest conversation cost sleepless nights ; exercise, except of the most moderate kind, was rather exhausting than refreshing ; he yearly lost weeks and months by inability to study or write ; and to one who knew him, it only seemed surprising that he could accomplish so much. Had he but retained the buoyancy of early years, he might, by scholarship and by public and social labors, have shed abroad a light, beside which his actual success would be dim. On the other hand, indeed, it may be asked, whether his river of life did not gain depth from the narrow channel through which it was forced to roll ? Fortitude, purity, concentration, may have in some degree compensated him for lack of strength. But to one who believes that God has forever established a harmony between the spiritual and natural worlds, it must in all cases appear probable that the teachings of health will be more large, sound, varied, rich, than those of sickness. Yet he struggled bravely with his fate. He knew that his own imprudence had done much to cause his infirmity, and humbly accepted the limits which it imposed, while he steadily sought to regain and keep the largest measure of power.

“The very scrupulous care that he took of himself,” writes a sister, “was a sacrifice to duty. Most beautiful, too, was his thoughtfulness to avoid being a burden upon others. His patience was unvarying. I can recall one instance of a feverish attack during the heat of summer. We had been fanning him during the day, and he had seemed as tranquil as a sleeping infant; but to our great surprise, when the physician came in towards evening, he entreated him to give him something to allay the restlessness which was almost beyond his bearing or power of control. But when was he otherwise than gentle!” Thus his very weaknesses formed a new bond of affectionate respect. He saw with pity the habits of effeminacy and self-indulgence which constant regard to one’s own state too often breeds in the invalid, and systematically guarded against such temptations. With the pride of an energetic character, too, he felt the shame of seeming to be a valetudinarian. But the keenest pain he suffered was, from being forced to halt when he would have hastened, and to leave untried many a promising plan of self-culture and of usefulness. This was the true cross to a spirit so earnest in hope, comprehensive in sympathy, conscientious, and brave; and nothing could have been more manly than the uncomplaining serenity with which he bore it.

Mr. Channing chiefly lamented his want of strength because he was thereby hampered in his private studies, and in schemes of professional activity. He did what he could, and too often much more than he ought, but fell far short of his ideal, and saw all round him fields white for the harvest, when his arm was too feeble to put in the sickle and reap. Yet, from his first appearance in the pulpit, he made a sensation such as had been long unknown in Boston, distinguished as many of her ministers justly were. The highest among them, Dr. Kirkland, said truly of him, and of Buckminster, who came forward two years later, that they had introduced “a new era in preaching.” Their congregations were thronged; and when either of them was to take his turn at the Thursday lecture in Chauncy Place, the usually thin audience at that antiquated service became a crowd.

Immediately after Mr. Channing’s settlement, the small society in Federal Street was much enlarged by the numbers drawn around the young, devoted, eloquent pastor; and from that time forward steadily grew, until, in 1809, the old church was taken down, and the corner-stone laid of the large building which afterward occupied its place. The devoutly disposed in the community looked to him with the hope that he might be a means of fanning once more to flame the smouldering ashes on the altars of piety. The serious-



ness of his deportment, the depth and sweetness of his voice, the pathos with which he read the Scriptures and sacred poetry, the solemnity of his appeals, his rapt and kindling enthusiasm, his humble, trustful spirit of prayer, his subdued feeling, so expressive of personal experience, made religion a new reality; while his whole air and look of spirituality won them to listen by its mild and somewhat melancholy beauty. The most trifling saw in him a man thoroughly in earnest, who spoke not of dreams and fictions, but of facts with which he was intimately conversant; and the serious gladly welcomed one who led the way, and beckoned them nearer to the holy of holies which they aspired to enter. Intellectual people, too, were attracted by the power and grace of his pulpit addresses. He opened to them a large range of thought, presented clear, connected, and complete views of various topics, roused their faculties of discernment by nice discriminations and exact statements, and gratified their taste by the finished simplicity of his style. But the novelty, perhaps, that chiefly stirred his audiences was the directness with which he even then brought his Christian principles to bear upon actual life. With no flights of mystic exaltation, forgetful in raptures of the earth, with no abstract systems of metaphysical theology, with no coldly elegant moral essays, did he occupy the minds of his hearers, but with near and sublime objects made evident by faith, with lucid truths approved alike by Scripture and by conscience, and with duties pressed urgently home upon all as rules for daily practice. He saw, and made others see, that life was no play-place, but a magnificent scene for glorifying God, and a rich school for the education of spirits. He showed to men the substance, of which surrounding appearances are the shadow; and behind transient experiences revealed the spiritual laws which they express. Thus he gathered round him an enlarging circle of devoted friends, who gratefully felt that they drank in from him new life. The old members of the society, too, for the most part simple people of plain manners, took the heartiest delight in his services, while feeling just pride in his talents. And the few distinguished persons of the congregation knew well how to appreciate his rare gifts, and to extend his fame. Thus was he in every way favorably situated to call out his highest powers; and his journals show how ardently he strove to fulfil the hopes which he knew were cherished for his usefulness.

“My great end is the promotion of the moral and religious interests of mankind, the cause of virtue, the gospel. This is my occupation. This end may be accomplished everywhere. Let me



make this study the *great end* of life. Let me study for this. Let my exercise, relaxation, visits, prayers, all have this in view. Let me eat and sleep for this. Let me never lose sight of my flock, constantly oversee them, never leave them. Let me strive to make them fruitful to God, direct and excite exertion for good, exhibit an example of the life of God."

"Weekly lectures are highly important. What an influence in the commonwealth would a general attention to religion in the capital exert! May not the present increased interest be a sprinkling before the shower?"

"Meetings to pray for the spirit. Let me when among Christians, when visiting them, pray with them, that men may be awakened to religious attention, and desire that God be glorified, Christ obeyed, heaven sought."

"Religious *union*. How to make them feel a desire of assisting, quickening each other in a religious course. Visit the church often in a religious manner. Pray in private and in public for this union. Make this the subject of conversation. Meetings of the church; and in order to make them useful, let me labor to become an extemporaneous preacher. The church should feel that on their prayers and zeal the salvation of others depends. Let me *now* strive to quicken my church, while attention is awakened to religion."

"The influence of the church I need. I can do little myself. I want the brethren to be able to converse, the sisters at home to be able to instil into the minds of their children religious truth. I should lend suitable books, exalt their intellectual powers, direct their habitual thoughts.

"Have I not reason to fear that many are destitute of love to God, to Christ, to the church, to man? Do they not confide in a course of negative goodness? Are they not full of false hopes from the performance of particular duties, abstinence from great crimes? Are they not easy and satisfied because they give no positive evidence of irreligion, not because they have positive evidence of religion? Do they not mistake habit for principle? Do the hopes, pleasures, duties, difficulties of religion form any part of domestic conversation? Is holiness an end? Is God all in all? Is Christ all in all to them? Is love the habit of their soul, operating in their whole conduct?"

"Christ came to recover men from sin. A change of heart is the object of the gospel. In this consists the redemption of Christ. It becomes men to weep, to feel true, hearty sorrow at sin itself, to abhor and condemn themselves as without excuse, to feel themselves

dependent upon free, unmerited, unobligated, sovereign grace for pardon and renewal. Repentance includes unconditional submission, choice and desire that God should reign, should accomplish his will, should dispose of his creatures as seems to him best. It supposes subjection of ourselves and others wholly to his will. It gives all things in all times and all places to him as his own forever."

"The spirit of God is the blessing of the new covenant. The knowledge, love, imitation, service, and enjoyment of God through eternity are all included in this gift. There can be no other rational, eternal blessedness. The spirit of God operates on the heart, creates new exercises, and dwells in the soul of Christians by constantly and immediately supporting all good affections. Every man must be new-born, have a new heart, a new principle, end, motive, disposition, a change by the spirit into a meek, submissive, self-renouncing, self-abhorring, benevolent state of soul, before he can believe, approve, choose the gospel, and receive the kingdom of heaven."

"I must make the knowledge of divine truth my end, and therefore labor to preserve a mind fitted to discover, and a heart ready to receive, instruction. The disposal of time, food, &c., should all be directed to this object; and every truth I receive I should labor immediately to impress on my own heart and on others."

"Let me unite with the most serious statedly in prayer, for the *revival of religion* in the society. Let the promotion of religion be the sole end of all exertions; let nothing else be named. O the happiness of a religious society!"

"I ought to bear my people on my heart; feel the worth of their souls, that they have the capacity to serve, enjoy, glorify God forever; feel continual heaviness and sorrow for their neglect of God; be fervent, unceasing in prayer; make their spiritual prosperity my joy; indulge in no pleasure, engage in no pursuit, which may not subserve this end; let every worldly interest which will drive them from my mind be resigned; let my highest anxiety, fear, hope, desire, affection, be exercised toward them, that God may have a people among them. Let me be the servant of the least among them for this purpose."

"Let me never talk of my zeal for souls, *except with God*; let me avoid all egotism, and carefully abstain from mention of personal experience on this subject; let me never condemn other ministers as cold; let me work where my work will not be known, among the poor, ignorant, &c. Let me lead the serious from dependence on me, from high thoughts of my society, to Christ. Let me labor

most where I shall experience least approbation, and attend chiefly to the insensible and sluggish. Let me do much in secret, pray, struggle, and purify myself for my people ; let none know."

"I am sensible of a want of tenderness in my preaching. I want to preach striking, rather than melting, sermons. Let me seek that my heart be soft."

"God alone can soften my people ; let me labor, therefore, chiefly in prayer. There is great disregard to prayer among us. In public worship preaching is exalted above prayer. Let me strive to make this part of the service more interesting."

"Let me separate a portion of time for considering the nature and importance of my office, and for exciting a holy, devout zeal, a fervent, sincere desire for the holiness and happiness of my people."

"Let my visits be ministerial, serious ; let me speak plainly on religion, attend to the character of individuals, observe their wants. What a waste of time to make other visits ! If I should see a man of business give up two hours a day to making mere calls, I should think him an idler. How am I better ? Whence my timidity on the subject of religion ? I do not carry conversation far enough to be serious, earnest, and hence seize no end with sufficient force."

"Let me give courses of lectures upon various subjects, adapted to different ages and conditions ; a course to parents and heads of families ; to the church ; on church history, with applications of prophecy ; on the evidences, for the young ; weekly exhortations to children ; a course on the duties of the young ; on Jewish history and antiquities ; on the testimony of nature to God ; a course of expositions ; a series on the parables ; &c."

"My preaching does not seem to be followed with a devout, grateful, submissive, holy spirit in my church. I do not witness fervor and happiness from the prospect and hope of heaven. Their religious conversation limited to a few topics, heartless, cold, uninteresting ! Whence is this ? I feel increasing doubts about my success. However, we are commanded not to faint. I say to myself, One soul saved ; and I feel that such an object deserves all exertion."

"The children are members of the church of Christ ; earnest, affectionate attention is due to them. I must catechise them, pray with them, teach them to pray ; suggest subjects which they can illustrate ; give them texts to remember ; instruct them in the duties peculiar to their age, and in the doctrines suited to them."

These resolves were carried into deeds ; and he was at this period an indefatigable pastor. He visited constantly, had periodical



prayer-meetings, and meetings for conversation and religious instruction, — varying them as seemed best fitted to keep interest alive, — and, indeed, practised most of the modes which, though rare then, have now become common, for quickening religious sensibility and producing Christian union. To the sick he was a faithful friend, and entered into their anxieties and hopes with a touching devoutness, that lifted up their spirits as on angel wings in prayer. Into the chamber of death he came with the auroral light of the resurrection upon his brow. And to the mourner he showed the manna of consolation forever dropping on the desert. Yet sometimes his quick sensibility subdued him. When one of his oldest and most dear parishioners, Mr. Thomas Davis, was dying, he left the weeping group around the bedside, and coming to the church amidst the then small band of his parishioners, so intimate with each other that they seemed like one family, he endeavored to commend the departing soul to the Heavenly Father. But his voice died in the utterance; he sank his head on the desk, and burst into tears. A sob ran through the congregation, and then there was stillness. On one other occasion, when visiting a family lately bereaved, he sat down with the circle of mourners, and after remaining for a long time in silence, as if overcome with the fulness of his feelings, he uttered a groan, rose, and left the room. But these were exceptions. He usually had perfect self-control, and wore an air of serene cheerfulness, that spread a contagious calmness over troubled hearts.

In the children of the society he felt the deepest interest. He liked to gather them after service around the pulpit; when, coming down, he would converse with them, and give them familiar lessons. This was before the custom of Sunday schools was introduced. Later in his ministry, he and his friend Thacher prepared their well-known catechism. But at first he confined himself chiefly to oral instruction. He is remembered as having been very successful in making these addresses simple and attractive, clothing beautiful thoughts in intelligible language, and addressing them to his young friends with a benignant smile, that won their confidence and opened their hearts. He once pleasantly remarked, that the most satisfactory compliment he had ever received was from a little girl, who told her mother, “I understood every word he said.” His respect for children was, indeed, singularly strong; and *respect* is the only word that can fitly express the trust he felt and manifested in their purity. He had, from the first, a profound love for their native honor, their quick moral intuitions, their truth and innocence. And once, when looking at the corpse of a beautiful



child, he said, "I consider those so early taken as mysteriously privileged."

While thus devoted to his own congregation, and made every year more and more an object of interest to the community at large by the good influences which were seen to flow from his pulpit, Mr. Channing became widely known also by the useful custom of exchanges, so universal in New England. In making these he limited himself to no denomination, but freely held intercourse with all who were seeking divine light and life. So indiscriminate, indeed, was he in this respect, that it was found difficult for many years to assign him a place in any of the sects, which the increasing temper of exclusiveness was gradually forming. Alternately he was claimed and disowned by all, being himself, as we shall hereafter see, chiefly anxious to shun controversy, and to keep the transparent heaven of religion unobscured by the clouds of theological disputes. Still, it was chiefly in Boston, and among the liberal divines of that capital, that his exchanges were necessarily made; and in their societies he was at all times a favorite preacher, though not a few complained of his gloom, and very many preferred the sententious wisdom, quaintness, sagacity, and rich variety of Kirkland, and the chaste earnestness, the scholarly fulness of allusion, the elegance of style, and eloquent oratory of Buckminster. Such hearers often carried doubtless to the religious assembly their delightful associations with the superior conversational gifts of those gentlemen, who were both distinguished for wit, pleasantry, anecdote, and that easy play of fancy which illuminates with transient charm the topic of the hour, and whose manners contrasted favorably with Mr. Channing's absorbed air, his almost judicial moral severity, and his evident distaste for the current trifles which polish the surface of life.

To each of these distinguished men he was bound by ties of strong friendship, and he felt for their talents and acquirements a respect which they cordially reciprocated. Under date of November, 1806, we find Mr. Buckminster thus writing to him from Paris, whither he had been driven to recruit by the malady which so prematurely eclipsed his bright genius.

"Before this reaches you, you will be restored, I trust, to your people; for truly I am very anxious for the religious situation of Boston, deprived, as it now is, in three societies, of regular pastors. I am sometimes ashamed of myself, when I think that I am here in Paris in perfect idleness, while you are sinking under the labors of your ministry. But God grant that we may be able to congratulate each other next summer, upon meeting, as I hope we shall, in health, and taught by our sufferings to cherish more carefully than

ever this inestimable gift of our Maker, and not to draw upon it too fast, so that we may use it longer and more sacredly in the service of our people and for the interests of truth. Farewell, my dear friend! I pray that I may soon hear of your perfect recovery. Remember my dear people as often as you can.

“Your friend and brother,

“J. S. B.”

For Mr. Samuel C. Thacher, too, — who studied divinity under his care, and who became the beloved minister of the New South Church, when Dr. Kirkland was called to the station that, after 1810, he filled with so much honor to himself and to the institution, of the Presidency of Harvard University, — he cherished the warmest esteem, to which Mr. Thacher responded by most reverent love.

“The many admirable principles I have heard from you,” writes his young friend, “I shall endeavor always to recollect, and it shall be my prayer to the Giver of all good, that I may not be unworthy the regard of the virtuous and wise. Remember me with much love to your brother, and believe me, my dear Sir, with all possible gratitude and affection, your friend,  
S. C. T.”

On the occasion of this young brother's settlement, — whose opening talents and virtues Mr. Channing watched with the most tender interest, by whose example he felt himself animated, and to whom he was constantly more and more closely bound by harmony in views and spiritual sympathy, — he entered the following reflections in his journal: —

“1811, May 16. This week is peculiarly eventful and interesting. Yesterday I assisted at the ordination of my friend, S. C. Thacher. I presented him the right hand of fellowship. This event should recall to me the day when I devoted myself to the Christian ministry. Have I been a faithful, diligent minister, inquiring for every means of doing good to my people, and devoted most sincerely to their improvement? Let me be quickened by this event, which has connected with me a young man whom I esteem and love. Let me confer with him on the means of benefiting our societies. Let me save him, if possible, from my errors. Let me avoid every feeling of rivalry. Merciful God, render him a better man and Christian than myself. Have I made sufficient sacrifices to the young men who have studied with me? Have I paid attentions, instead of expecting them? Let me endeavor to excite my young brother to great fervor and activity, and let me catch the same warmth from him. I fear, I feel, that I and my brethren are

not sufficiently engaged, and not desirous enough to see fruits from our labors. I am not ready to live a suffering life for Jesus Christ. My Saviour! may I think of thy cross, of what thou hast endured for human happiness, and may I count it my highest honor to be a partaker of thy sufferings."

And again he thus writes of him to a friend:—

"Heaven can hardly bestow on me a greater blessing than the friendship of Thacher. The purity of his character and life, and his devotion to his profession, render him peculiarly important to us at this time."

Thus cordial, honorable, mutually beneficial, and every way manly, were the relations between these friends and a large circle of their brethren. But the days of one of the noblest of them were numbered. On the 9th of June, 1812, the sad tidings of the death of Buckminster threw the whole community into grief. How deeply Mr. Channing mourned with others the destruction of the hopes which clustered round this gifted and accomplished man appears from many of his papers of that period. He was himself absent at the time from home; but when he came back, he preached by request a funeral sermon before the Brattle Street Society, and to his own people spoke as follows:

"On returning to this place, I am not permitted to see and embrace a Christian brother, a fellow-laborer in the gospel, whom I left in the midst of usefulness,—one of the brightest ornaments of his profession, and of this country,—whose vigor of mind, whose eloquence, whose piety, whose sincere devotion to the interests of Christianity, I have witnessed with increasing pleasure and increasing hope. But God, who imparted to this highly favored servant such unusual gifts, who kindled this superior intellect, has suddenly removed him from his wide sphere of honor and usefulness. That you followed to the tomb this righteous man with serious thought and sorrowful reflection I cannot doubt. My own heart sunk within me, when I heard the painful tidings of his death. I felt for the loss I had experienced as an individual; but this sorrow was faint, compared with my painful sense of the heavy loss which our churches had experienced."

And in a letter he thus expresses himself:—

"Buckminster's death gives me many painful and solicitous feelings in relation to the interests of religion in this place. People here, as you well know, are attached to religious institutions, not so much by a sense of the value of religion as by their love to their minister; and I fear that their zeal will grow cold, when their

ministers are removed. I wish that there were more attachment to the truth, and less to the man who delivers it. The loss of Mr. Buckminster appears to me irreparable. I know no man who unites so many gifts from nature, so many acquisitions from study, and such power of rendering religion interesting to all classes of society, especially to the improved, the polished, the fashionable."

As a last act of honor to this already celebrated preacher, he, with Mr. S. C. Thacher, Mr. Buckminster's more particular friend, was requested to select and prepare a portion of his sermons for the press.

"Mr. Buckminster's papers," writes Mr. George Ticknor, "came into my hands after his death, so that I had a good deal to do with this publication, — a circumstance which I mention as accounting for my knowledge of the facts in relation to it. Mr. Channing undertook it, I think, with interest and pleasure, and gave a good deal of time to it; though of course the labor and responsibility came chiefly on Mr. Thacher. The three sermons on Faith, and the sermon on Philemon, attracted, I believe, more of his attention than any others. In the last, an omission was made at his suggestion; but it may be worth notice, in reference to the opinions he afterwards entertained on the subject, that the strong phrases in the discourse that touch slavery did not excite his attention. At least, I am satisfied that he made no remarks about them: and I remember the way in which he went over the whole of the sermon. What most struck me, throughout his examination of the manuscripts, was his interest in Mr. Buckminster's reputation, and his care that justice should be done to it."

The rule by which he was governed in this work was thus once communicated by himself: —

"Will you allow me to suggest a counsel which I give to those who are publishing posthumous works? It is, to beware of publishing too much. The *best* of a man's writings should be selected, with somewhat fastidious criticism, for the press; and care should be taken, lest the best be lost and fail of their effect by being surrounded with much that wants interest, and will not be read. I proceeded on this principle in selecting Mr. Buckminster's sermons, and I think their great success is in part owing to it."

But besides these friends, to whom he was united by the relations of the pastoral office, and the cares and responsibilities, studies and hopes, incident to the ministerial profession, Mr. Channing had others with whom he held intercourse by letter; and some passages, taken from his correspondence at this period, may be of interest,



as yet further illustrating his character. They will be suitably prefaced by one in which he pleasantly alludes to the stiffness of mental and moral habits contracted by too monotonous an absorption in his own pursuits.

“1812. The great objection I have to writing letters is, that I can hardly do so without beginning to preach. I have composed sermons till I can with difficulty write anything else. I exhort when I should smile. Not that I think a letter should be written without a desire to do good; but instruction should be delivered with somewhat less formality than from the pulpit. I will try, however, to lay aside my grave countenance sometimes.”

“1808. This is my birthday. I have been looking back on the blessings which have filled up my existence. The last year, I find, has been crowned with mercies; and in acknowledging the unmerited goodness of God, I cannot but thank him that he has put it into the heart of so kind a friend to take such an interest in my welfare, and to express toward me so much tenderness and affection. All my life long, God has been raising up to me benefactors. I never experienced the want of a friendly hand to support me. O that with his blessings he would give me a heart to be grateful for them! Give me your prayers, that the next year of my life may be more useful than the last; that every day may bring me nearer to heaven; that I may feel more of the power of religion; that God would condescend to use even me as an instrument in advancing his cause in the world.”

“1809. I feel more and more that I am doing little good; but I blame myself as much as others. Since you have been absent, I have felt more debilitated than usual. I have not been capable of much mental exertion. How much do I need these rebukes to keep me humble! You know the sin which most easily besets me. I have reason to be grateful for the various methods in which God is teaching me my dependence and imbecility.”

“1812. *New Year's day.*<sup>1</sup> The past year has been to us both peculiarly interesting. It has made some important changes in our domestic circles, and it has left, I hope, some salutary impressions on ourselves and our friends. I look back on it with much humiliation. I fear that my sufferings have not refined me as they ought. I am sure that my blessings have not left that tender sense of the Divine goodness which I wish ever to maintain. . . . My increasing duties require increasing activity, and some-

<sup>1</sup> To his mother.

times they suggest many painful fears and forebodings. Pray for me, that I may be faithful and useful. . . .

“I recollect on this day the kindness and affection which you have expressed toward me with so much uniformity and tenderness, since I first knew you. Your friendship I have valued as one of the great blessings of my life, and I hope it will not forsake me in any prosperous or adverse changes which may await me. . . .

“I know that I have many friends, — perhaps few are more favored than I. But still I cannot spare you. How much of the happiness, and I may add of the usefulness, of my life do I owe to your tender, unremitting kindness! How often have I been kept from fainting by your cheering voice! Do not say that I am inclined to exaggerate your offices of friendship. I cannot express what I feel. I have often felt that your partiality to me was unmerited, but I am not just enough to wish it diminished. It has become one of my highest earthly blessings. It is one of the few blessings to which I look forward with confidence. I feel that many other friends may fail, but I feel a strange assurance that no changes can sever us from each other. Is it not religion, that indissoluble bond, which unites us?”

“1811. In the beginning of this letter, I have alluded to an affliction which I have been called to sustain. It has pleased God this week to remove from us a friend in whom I have long felt a strong and increasing interest. You undoubtedly heard of her frequently, whilst you lived in this town; but her character, her worth, you probably never knew. It has been my privilege and happiness, for some time, to enjoy an intimacy with this singular woman, this highly favored child of God. She has been a great sufferer for several years, but she has suffered so meekly and patiently, her character has been so refined and elevated by suffering, she embraced all around her with such a strong and tender affection, amidst pains which would have rendered others insensible to all but themselves, she discovered such unabated energy of mind at the moment that her emaciated frame seemed just ready to resign its breath, that I have contemplated her with a delight and admiration which very few of our race have inspired. I have understood that in early life she was the victim of sensibility; and indeed it was easy to see that her feelings tended to excess. But religion, that refining and subduing principle, exerted its kindest influence on her heart. She was called to a struggle peculiarly arduous, but she was conqueror. I cannot mourn for her departure; yet it is a thought which almost saddens me, that I am no more to hear her animated voice, no more to commune with that powerful mind, that

warm and pure heart, on this side the grave. But to her pious and virtuous friends she is not lost; there is society in heaven."

"1810. I am not insensible to commendation. I will go farther. There is a commendation which affords me an exquisite satisfaction, — I mean a commendation which flows from an unaffected love of goodness, and from a desire to confirm it. Such commendation confers more honor on those who give than on him who receives it, and shows him that he has a place, not in the admiration of a superficial mind, but in the affections of a good, pure heart. Of this praise I can almost adopt the language of Henry the Fifth, —

‘If it be a sin to covet honor,  
I am the most offending soul alive.’

But to be ‘daubed with undiscerning praise,’ to have my frailties forced on my mind by being told that I have none, to receive a tribute which my heart disclaims, and which fills me with apprehension lest I have been a hypocrite, and have practised concealment more effectually than most of my fellow-beings, — this is indeed painful and humiliating. You will not think that I mean to apply *all* this to *you*; but in your letter you have ‘o’erstepped the bounds’ of that discretion which I wish you to observe. You throw your colors on your friends too profusely. Humanity is but another word for imperfection. It is a distempered vision which represents it as faultless. I cannot tell you, my dear friend, how much more I should have been gratified, if you had frankly disclosed to me the observations you must have made on my character, and had set before me the weaknesses, defects, disproportions, blemishes, which must have forced themselves on so discerning an eye."

"1812. I thank them for their good opinion; but to *you* I will say, that I feel almost an insuperable reluctance to visit, and much more to preach, where people have taken it into their heads that they are to see or hear anything uncommon. In my own breast I carry a conviction which contradicts all such opinions, and renders applause painful and mortifying. The tender affection which you express is indeed delightful, though I feel it is not altogether deserved; but fame, general notice, is not my right, and I pray God that it may never be my wish or end."

"1810. I would not have you think that any human friendship is of itself sufficient to raise you to the excellence I have fancied. There is another source to which you must repair. It is a most consoling doctrine of our religion, that the Father of Spirits de-

lights to perfect the works which he has made, that he has sent his Son to renew his own image in the human heart, that he inspires the love of virtue, that he hears the aspirations and assists the efforts of every soul which desires to be emancipated from its earthly and selfish propensities. . . .

“I am very willing that you should dissent from the opinion I have expressed of Hume. When I reviewed that part of my letter, I feared that I had been declamatory rather than convincing; that I had carried my principle too far. It is a fault which I have often observed in my character, that I am prone to overstate an argument, — to infer too much from my premises, — to exhibit a truth without the necessary limitations. I want to make an impression, and defeat my end by demanding a stronger conviction or a more unqualified assent than I have a right to expect. I need to seek the excellence for which Bishop Butler is so remarkable, — I mean that of being so cautious and modest in his inferences, that his readers not only concede the positions for which he contends, but almost blame him for not demanding more. This habit conciliates great confidence for a writer; and we are naturally impressed with the strength of his cause, when we see him able to support it without straining a single argument, or even carrying it to its fair extent. Some people, rather than lose a good metaphor, or a fine sentence, are often tempted to assert what is not altogether accurate; and they have their reward. They astonish, but do not convince. They strike, but do not keep their hold of the mind. May you and I love *Truth* better than *Rhetoric*.”

Thus warm were Mr. Channing's sympathies, in the home circle, in his congregation, towards his brethren in the ministry, and to many friends. They were not limited, however, to these spheres, but widened to embrace the wants of all his fellow-men in the community in which he dwelt. The poor were especially objects of his regard, many of whom freely visited him; and he had always several destitute families under his care. His liberality, indeed, was so unbounded, that his elder brother once said, “Really, William should have a guardian; he spends every dollar as soon as he gets it.” And so he actually did. With a good salary, he was yet always poor, — so utter was his dislike to accumulation, and so little anxious was he for the morrow; but, as he seldom mentioned his deeds of kindness, comparatively few of them are particularly known. Many letters, however, which yet remain, prove how varied, numerous, judicious, and patient were his labors to cheer, encourage, and redeem the unfortunate. And when his own means were exhausted,



rich and generous friends in his society made him their almoner. To one of these he writes: "I shall, indeed, consider it a great blessing to myself, as well as to you, to be able to suggest opportunities of usefulness; and I shall do this more readily, if you resolve never to oppose your own judgment out of respect to my feelings." And again he says: "I thank God that he permits me to communicate to you the thanks of the poor and afflicted. . . . Rejoice that, through you, praise has ascended to heaven, — joyful praise from the lips of a man just trembling over the grave. I feel myself indebted to you for the benevolence you exercise to others. . . . May you yet more earnestly espouse the interest of the Redeemer, and imitate his meek and condescending love." Thus was he doubly a benefactor, by presenting to the wealthy opportunities to bestow on the needy the gifts which God had intrusted to their guardianship.

"I never heard him speak of giving pecuniary aid to any one," says one of his sisters; "but facts speak for themselves. He must have had a thousand dollars to lay out, of which he spent scarcely anything upon himself, except in case of sickness, or when he had to take a journey. He never had money for any length of time, and I have no doubt that he always disposed of it nearly as fast as he received it. We must believe that he gave away nearly eight hundred a year, and I have known many times when he had nothing. In all his feelings he was large and noble. I remember, on one occasion, he had attended the funeral of a gentleman of fortune, and afterwards had visited the afflicted family. The widow, wishing to express her gratitude, enclosed him fifty dollars in a note. It was a sore trial to him. He could not bear to wound the feelings of the lady by a refusal; and yet, to accept it was not to be thought of. He returned it, and, I am sure, in doing so, found some way not to pain another by sparing himself. Think, for one moment, that any one could have offered *money* to such a being, as a return for his sympathy; but then it was so kindly meant on her part, that I could not mention it even now, if she had not long been numbered among the dead. She only did not know him. He was as wise, too, as he was generous, and I never saw any one who more truly understood the value of money for the benefit of others, or who cared less for it himself."

One slight anecdote shows his disposition in this respect. As he was taking a journey alone in a chaise, he was induced by the appearance of poverty about a dwelling to stop and inquire after the condition of the inmates. He found a very old couple, helpless and wretched; and after conversing with them some time as to their simple life, he bade them farewell, leaving in their hands his

purse. He had ridden some miles before it occurred to him that his horse would suffer, though he might not, from his penniless condition; when, finding himself in the neighborhood of an acquaintance, he borrowed the necessary sum to carry him on his way.

His journals are interesting here, also, as showing how comprehensive at once and minutely exact was his charity, in devising benefit for the suffering. There are long and full lists of the various classes of the community who needed care or aid; sketches of their peculiar trials, temptations, and difficulties; suggestions for public works, benevolent operations, special reforms; and hints of all kinds as to the duties which society owes to its members. But a few extracts will speak for themselves.

“Things to be done in town.—Comfortable houses to be let cheap for the poor. Innocent and improving amusements. Interesting works to be circulated among them. Associations among mechanics for mutual support if reduced. Complete course of instruction for youth designed for active life. Dr. Lathrop’s plan of education. Justices’ salaries to be fixed; their fees; small debts; petty suits; oppression of the poor. Taverns; drinking-parties; a work on ardent spirits should be written. Fire-clubs. Apprentice-boys at bad houses; &c.”

“Poor-house.—Rooms to be better aired. There should be selection in assigning rooms. Tracts to be circulated there. Let me visit them once a week. They want plain, pious, unambitious, evangelical ministry; they want that gospel which teaches contentment in every state. An association of females to furnish them employments. Neatness should be prescribed. Great regularity in their exercises. Mutual respect required; decency of manners to each other.”

“Causes of poverty to be traced. Charity is not enough directed. Intimate acquaintance with poor families. Employment found. Economical improvements. Store-houses. Provisions of wood in large quantities at cheap prices, and so with all necessities of life; to be bought at cheap seasons, and sold in large quantities. Rumford boilers.”

“Excite no feeling of dependence. Stimulate to exertion. Relief, such as to call out energy, and remove whatever disheartens and disables.”

“How much capacity there is in the poorer classes of knowledge and affection! Why is it not developed? Is not the social order bad? Cannot all the capacities of all classes be called forth?

Cannot men's motives in pursuing wealth be purified? Cannot a strong conviction be established, that Christ's precepts in the plain sense are the only rule for Christians? Cannot the power of fashion and opinion, except in so far as they may be sanctioned by Christianity, be subverted?"

"Employ religious schoolmistresses in different parts of the town. The children of the poor need special care."

In this project he was at this time much interested, and was instrumental, in connection with others, in establishing primary schools — being prompted by the considerations, that, by such a provision, —

"The parents are relieved from a great burden, especially in the winter; the children are kept for many hours of the day at least out of the streets, where every vice is contracted, and from the crowded, unwholesome rooms, where they too often witness the worst examples; their faculties are in a measure called forth and improved; they acquire some habits of order, application, and industry; are trained to decency of manners, dress, and appearance; become fitted for the business of life, and are instructed in the Scriptures and the duties of morality."

"A bakehouse for the poor, established by a fund for their use; an association of the poor, contributing so much a week for a fund to support them in sickness; associations for relief of the sick, old, debtors, and for the employment of those who are without work."

"What can be done to exalt the poor and ignorant from a life of sense to an intellectual, moral, religious life? How excite an interest in the education of their children? Let me learn to extemporize, that I may administer plain instruction. May not the mind be quickened by interesting the heart in religion? The Divine character, peculiarly as displayed in Christianity, is the great means of exalting human nature. The poor need moral remedies. *Let the poor be my end.*"

"Let each rich family have some poor under their care; especially Christian families. Mention the poor to others. Connect the poor with good families."

"There should be an association to receive prostitutes, when reduced by want and disease, to reform and employ them. A house necessary, and one walled, &c. The object, seclusion, support, and rendering them useful. A strong aversion to licentiousness should be awakened."

"Immigrants. A society of advice. They are subjects of speculation, exposed to unprincipled men. They want direction,

friends. Keep them out of the way of designing people. They depend on the wants of landholders, &c."

"Africans. To enable them better to manage the affairs of this life; to acquire support, property; to elevate their desire of pleasure above sense, to social enjoyments and improvement of mind. I wish them to be thinking persons, to act from thought. Their modes of life would vary, if instruction was early given. A school may interest them. Their present evils — dirt, bad air, crowded rooms, and their poverty — originate in thoughtlessness, intemperance, &c. In learning they will find new pleasures, and be less tempted to irregularity. We must give them new tastes. What powers, how much *mind*, how much *heart*, what treasures, are contained in them! Shall all be lost? Awaken a sense of their true dignity and true excellence, and so prevent vain attention to dress, &c. Is it not possible to make a party among them in support of religion? May there not be a line of distinction drawn among them, and a sense of character awakened?"

These extracts from papers and journals, extending through the first years of his ministry, show how early and how earnestly his sympathies went out to his fellow-men of every condition. He seems to have wished — to quote again his diary — "to associate with all classes, to know their wants, and to become acquainted with the world in which I am placed." His longing was for nothing less than humanity made universal. The spirit that dictated his enthusiastic letters from Richmond was working in him still, and prompting him to seek for every practicable mode of redeeming man from the inhuman degradations to which tens of thousands are subject in a society selfish in its principles, laws, customs, maxims, influences, tendencies. He saw that actual life in Christian communities is a hideous mockery of the generally professed discipleship to Him whose last symbolic act was to gird himself with a towel and to wash his disciples' feet, whose test of distinction was, "Let him that would be greatest among you be the servant of all," and who left as his dying legacy the new commandment, "*As I have loved you, so love ye one another.*"

But these charities within his immediate neighborhood, extensive as they were, did not exhaust Mr. Channing's interest in his race. In the growing prevalence of order, justice, freedom, over the internal legislation of the nations of Christendom, and of humanity and peace through their diplomatic, commercial, and intellectual intercourse, he saw a providential process, by which the scattered societies of earth are becoming transformed and reunited into the



kingdom of heaven, — a slow process indeed to human sight, and one accompanied by trial and struggle, but yet a sure one. And thus believing, he thought that a minister of the glad tidings, of universal good-will, was so far from being exempt from the duties of a citizen, that he was, on the contrary, under special obligation to infuse, as he best could, the spirit of love, the hope of a higher future for mankind, the sense of responsibility to a superhuman authority, into the hearts of his fellows, — heated as they were by partisan passions, and turned from their rightful function of mutual beneficence by worldly jealousies.

From early youth he had been, as we have observed, conversant with political movements; he had been bred up in ardent attachment to liberty under constitutional limits; he had shared in the exhilarating anticipations first excited by the French Revolution, and in the revulsion of shame and sorrow produced by its after excesses; he had watched the triumphs of the “armed apostle of democracy,” till he had seen him rear his throne of universal empire upon prostrate states, which fell bravely struggling for independent national existence; and now, in common with many of the best and wisest around him, he feared, as an event by no means impossible, that the United States might be needed as an ark for freedom, when the deluge of despotism had overswept Europe. In a word, he was at this time thoroughly in principle and affections a Federalist.

Accordingly, in his Fast and Thanksgiving sermons, from which extracts will hereafter be given, he entered freely into the consideration of national dangers and duties, and brought men and measures to the test of the Christian standard. In this course of conduct he had the sanction of such men as Dr. Osgood and Dr. Kirkland; but many of his brethren condemned him for desecrating the dignity of the pulpit by the introduction of such topics, and large numbers of the laity were indignant at his presumption, as they considered it, and officious intermeddling in matters beyond his sphere. As this was the period of the embargo and the last war, when commerce was prostrate and industry languished, — when the bond of the Union was almost severed by civil strife, and angry controversies prevailed in public and private, — when family ties and old friendships were rudely broken by political dissensions, — when the circles of social intercourse were limited to those who adopted the same party creeds, and men rose or fell in the scale of esteem as their opinions varied, — when in the theatre the shouts of “*Ça ira*,” and “God save the king,” alternately drowned each other, — when angry mobs tore unpopular editors from the jails

where they were put for safety, — and when, in a word, the nation was convulsed, — it can easily be understood that a preacher who espoused the cause of either of the contending bodies was forced to bear the brunt of severe censure, and to be made the object of exaggerated praise. To Mr. Channing one of these results was as distasteful as the other; but as several of his sermons were printed, and thus became widely known, he largely experienced both. Some critics went so far as to ascribe to him no better motive for overstepping the usual lines of pulpit discussion, than that of seeking the notoriety which he thus met; a charge, to be sure, which seemed sufficiently absurd to those who knew the man, and which his friends might have fully answered by stating the facts, that he had declined to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa oration before Harvard University from aversion to appear in public, that he habitually shunned various opportunities for displaying his talents, and held back from even the literary enterprises in which he was well qualified to excel, because he feared lest he might thus be led astray from the more appropriate duties of his profession. But he knew his own heart, and year by year went steadily on his course of giving with perfect frankness such warnings and rebukes as he deemed timely.

In these trials he had in private the faithful counsel of his brother Francis, who was a firm and earnest advocate of the same political views, and in public he received the support of some of the most distinguished of his fellow-citizens; for this was the day when Governor Strong communicated the stern resolution of his character to the councils of the State, when George Cabot with his pen and tongue cast over perplexed subjects the clear light of his sagacious judgment, when Fisher Ames held private circles and public assemblies spellbound by the charm of his rich eloquence, and when Boston and Massachusetts generally were strongly enlisted on the Federal side. His decided action had the effect of adding to his celebrity and influence; and he took at this time in public respect the position which he held through the rest of life. Thenceforward he was known as a man of unfaltering principle, at once temperate and bold, slow to form opinions, but fearless to maintain them, thoroughly to be depended upon in the most trying scenes, ready to follow through good or ill report his convictions of right, and who always

“walked attended  
By a strong-siding champion, Conscience.”

Thus passed the first ten years and more of Mr. Channing's ministerial life. They were uneventful, but inwardly rich in results; and

many good seeds then planted themselves, which were afterwards to bear abundant fruits. Inherited errors, too, not a few, in thought and practice, had been slowly outgrown, — so slowly, that he was perhaps unconscious of the change which had been wrought in his principles. Above all, he had learned the lesson of keeping true to his purest, highest self, or, to express the same fact more humbly and justly, of being obedient to the Divine will, however revealed to his inmost reason. Goodness had firmly enthroned itself as the reigning power in his nature. He lived the life communicated from above. He was becoming yearly and daily more and more a child of God.

From his very entrance on a public career, he produced upon all who came into his presence the impression of matured virtue and wisdom, and inspired reverence though young. He wore an air of dignity and self-command, of pure elevation of purpose, and of calm enthusiasm, that disarmed familiarity. Careful of the rights of others, courteous and gentle, he allowed no intrusions upon himself. He was deaf to flattery, turned at once from any mention of his own services or position, paid no compliments, and would receive none; but, by constant reference to high standards of right, transferred the thoughts of those with whom he held intercourse from personal vanity to intrinsic excellence, and from individual claims to universal principles. He gave no time to what was unimportant, made demands upon the intellect and conscience of those he talked with, and inspired them with a sense of the substantial realities of existence. In his treatment of others there was no presumption nor partiality. He was deferential to old and young; listened without interruption, and with patience, even to the dull and rude; spoke ill of none, and would hear no ill-speaking; tolerated no levity, but at once overawed and silenced it by wise and generous suggestions; was never hasty, rash, nor impetuous in word or act, and met these weaknesses in others with an undisturbed firmness that disarmed passion while rebuking it. Above all, he recognized in his fellows no distinctions but those of character and intelligence, and, quietly disregarding capricious estimates and rules of mere etiquette, met rich and poor, learned and ignorant, upon the broad ground of mutual honor and kindness. Thus his influence was always sacred and sanctifying; and no better impression can be given of him, as he then appeared, than is presented in his description of the Good Minister, in the sermon — quite famous at the time — which he preached at the ordination of the Rev. John Codman in 1808. Henry Ware, the younger, once said truly, that Mr. Channing had there sketched his own portrait.



The passage is as follows, and with it this chapter may most suitably be closed.

“On this occasion, I have thought that it would be useful to dwell on the importance of a zealous and affectionate performance of ministerial duties. On this subject I could wish to hear rather than to speak. I feel that the place which belongs to me is not that of a confident teacher, but of an humble, self-accusing learner. When I look round on my fathers and brethren in the ministry, whose years and experience and improvements in piety peculiarly fit them for this theme, I feel no faint desire to resign to them the office I am expected to perform. But my feelings and wishes have been overruled; and now that I must speak, I wish to suggest something which will tend to quicken my own heart, which will stir up the minds of my brethren, and which will impress this numerous assembly with the duties and objects, the tremendous responsibility, and the infinitely solemn consequences of the sacred ministry. . . .

“To be instant in season and out of season is to be carried by affection to habitual, continued efforts for human salvation. It is not to make a few convulsive efforts when our feelings are accidentally warmed, and then to settle down into supineness and sloth. It is not to confine ourselves to a cold, mechanical round of what we call our duties, and to feel that we have done enough when we have done what is claimed and expected. It is to glow with a desire of success, to stand watching opportunities of doing good to the souls of men. It is to think that we have done nothing, whilst multitudes within our reach are perishing in their sins. It is to think no labor difficult, no sacrifice great, by which men may be saved. It is to explore new means of usefulness; to inquire what peculiar forms of Christian exertion our peculiar conditions and relations may admit; and then to follow with resolute purpose and strenuous effort the plans which approve themselves to our serious judgment. Perhaps there is no profession, no occupation, which encourages so much musing as the profession of a minister. It is very easy and very pleasing to mark out paths of usefulness, to set at work in our imaginations a variety of means from which the happiest effects are to flow. But to *do* as well as to *will*, this is the toil. To be instant in season and out of season implies that we carry deliberation into practice; that we convert possible into real good; that no discouragements have power to shake those purposes which we deliberately approve; that we wait not to consult ease or opinion, when we have already consulted God and our own con-



sciences ; that we press forward in the path of duty, undismayed by the opposition, unabashed by the ridicule, of the world.

“ This zeal and earnestness ought to pervade our whole ministerial duties. We should carry it into our *private* studies and devotions. A minister can impart to his people only what he has himself received. His own understanding must be first enlightened, his own heart first kindled, before he can communicate a rational and fervent piety. Hence a minister should apply with zeal to the various means of personal improvement. He should never be contented with his present attainments, never imagine that he has learned all which God has revealed, never say that he has formed his system, and has nothing to do but to preach it. Divine truth is infinite and can never be exhausted. The wisest of us are but children ; our views are very dim and narrow ; and even where we discern the truth, how faint is its practical impression ! . . .

“ But a minister must not only be earnest in his private studies ; he must be urgent and alive in his *public* duties. From his retirement he should bring into the sanctuary a heart glowing with Christian affections. His prayers should discover a mind familiar with God, accustomed to the mercy-seat, elevated by habitual devotion, and breathing without effort the pure and humble desires of a Christian. In preaching, his heart should disclose itself in his sentiments, manner, and style. Whilst unfolding the Divine perfections, he should let men see that they are perfections he himself loves and adores. In enjoining a Christian temper, he should urge it as one who has felt its beauty and power. When describing the promises of the gospel, he should speak with the animation of a holy hope. Whilst directing men to the cross, he should speak as one who has prostrated himself at its foot. This is pulpit eloquence. He should let men see that he has come, not to dazzle them with the studied ornaments of rhetoric, not to play before them the tricks of an orator, but to fix their solicitous attention on the concerns of eternity, to persuade them to be reconciled to God, and to incite them to universal obedience. Let me here mention, that it is highly important that his *manner* be earnest. By this I do not mean a noisy, tumultuous manner. I do not mean that a minister must have lungs of iron and a voice of thunder. Noise and earnestness are very different things. I only mean that the minister should deliver his message as if he felt its infinite weight, as if his whole soul were interested in its success ; and this he may do without being a brawler. In the still, small voice we may discern the language of the heart. I repeat it, this expression of the heart is the perfection of ministerial eloquence. Rules are very

useful to teach us what to avoid. But when rules have done all that they can for us, they will leave us chilling preachers, unless we superadd that tenderness and earnestness which an engaged heart can alone breathe through our delivery. May I be permitted to mention the want of this earnestness as a prevalent defect at the present day? My brethren, should not our sleeping hearers, and the faint effects of our ministry, lead us to inquire whether we present religious truth in the most impressive form? Is it asked, how this coldness of manner is to be remedied? Let us not, for this end, mimic feelings we do not possess. Let us, before we preach, possess our souls with the importance of the truth we are to deliver. Let us make our discourses truly our own, by catching first ourselves the impressions we wish to make on others. Whilst preaching, let the presence of the Divine Majesty frequently recur to us, that it may extinguish our fear of man, and excite an animating confidence in the blessing of God. Were these our habits, should we not be more interesting preachers?

“But, further, the zeal of the minister of Christ should extend beyond the sanctuary. He should carry into his common walks and conversations a mind bent on his great end, and ever ready to seize an opportunity of impressing men with religion. He should particularly labor in his own life, in his own familiar intercourse, to exhibit a uniform and interesting example of the truth he preaches. He should not only be solicitous to preach, but still more to live, Christianity. That minister is not instant in season and out of season, who has learned to excite in himself some momentary feelings, and to employ words and tears of entreaty, whilst in the pulpit; but who comes into the world ready to sympathize with its evil feelings, and to comply like a slave with its tyrannical requisitions.

“Such is Christian zeal. I need not mention that this zeal cannot be maintained without great attention to the government of our desires and passions. The mind and heart can never act vigorously on religion whilst fettered and benumbed by any sensual lust, by avarice or ambition. Would we attain the bold and persevering zeal enjoined by the apostle? We must keep under the body; we must partake with rigid temperance of animal pleasure; we must look with holy indifference on worldly wealth and honor; and thus preserve unwasted the energy of our souls, that we may consecrate it to the work which we have voluntarily assumed.

“This genuine Christian earnestness is too rarely seen. Ministers and private Christians are, indeed, very often in earnest; but their zeal is not seldom an unhallowed fire, kindled at any altar

rather than that of God. There are some whose zeal is madness, who place religion in the fervors and ecstasies of a disordered mind, and who shatter their own and others' understandings in a whirlwind of sound. There are some whose zeal is partial; they spend it all on forms and opinions, which, though not unimportant, are not the essentials of Christianity. They compass sea and land, not to make followers of Christ, but converts to their sect. They overlook the heart, that they may rectify the head; and make Christianity, not a vital, inward, efficient principle, expressed in increasing conformity to Jesus Christ, but a dry, cold, barren system of modes and speculations. There are some who are earnest enough, but their earnestness is passionate and irritable. They cannot bear contradiction. They do not address serious argument to the erroneous, and affectionate persuasion to the sinful; but express their zeal in clamor, abuse, hard names, and all the varieties of persecution which their situation places within their reach. There is also a zeal which is the base-born progeny of pride and ambition. It is ever busy and active, for it loves to be seen and heard, and to acquire influence in the church. It is greedy of services which draw attention, and seeks to heighten itself by casting severe reflections on the lukewarmness of others. Remote from all these is true Christian zeal. True zeal is enlightened and judicious, meek and gentle; sensible of its own infirmities, and therefore ready to bear long with others; not devoted to a party, but to the wide interests of Christian piety; not anxious for elevation, but willing to be eclipsed and thrown far behind by the more splendid and useful exertions of others for the common cause of Christianity. So single, disinterested, and fervent is the zeal which the gospel requires of its ministers."

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## CHAPTER II. — SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

ÆT. 23-34. 1803-1814.

WE have followed Mr. Channing through the first ten years of his ministry, and have seen how the living temple was built up within him, — from the holy of holies, where Divine Love shone on the tabernacle of conscience, to the outer courts in which even worldly interests were taught to bow before the presence of the All Good. He had entered upon the pastoral office with many doubts and fears, humbled by conscious unworthiness, subdued beneath a sense of the

stern realities of earthly discipline, and intent with all his moral energy to lead the heavenly life. His enthusiasm had been concentrated in a solemn purpose of perfect fidelity, and the force of his intellect absorbed in solving the problems of man's degeneracy, and his restoration to dignity and freedom. The feeling that he had assumed the most responsible of human functions, in the performance of whose duties he could not but affect a large number of fellow-beings by the contagion of his inward maladies, or the refreshment of his health, had made him severely scrupulous. And through every act, in all relations, he had offered the petition, —

“Lord! place me in thy concert, give one strain  
To my poor reed.”

His earliest preaching was pathetic, perhaps even sad, in tone. It was full of aspirations after the peace of a will made one with the will of God, and of strict demands for the purest self-denial. But gradually, as he was prepared, the beauty and blessedness of Divine communion streamed in upon his wakeful heart, like the glow of dawn through eastern windows.

This spiritual development we have now to trace, and extracts from his sermons will afford us the surest guidance. His discourses, indeed, were his best diary. Their topics and the treatment of them were transcribed from the records in his heart; and his reproofs and appeals to his people were but the outward symbol of his own private struggles. In making these extracts, the rule has been kept of selecting such passages as were apparently of most interest to him at the time when they were written, and which are proved to have been the native growth of his mind by containing the views most fully and frequently unfolded by him in later years.

The attentive reader can hardly fail to be impressed with the manifestation of moral and mental *unity* given in these papers. Through modes of thought and expression merely adventitious, a few grand ideas are put forth, at first feeble, but slowly expanding until they absorb into their strong trunks and wide-spread boughs the whole vigor of his life. In sentiment and style these sermons are original, in the sense that they were not derived from the atmosphere of the surrounding community, or from the leading minds with which Mr. Channing held intercourse. Indeed, there was little resembling them in the preaching at that time prevalent in Boston or New England. But while original, he was far from being eccentric. He felt no desire to push his views to their extremes, no passion for system-making prompted him, no unqualified statements were hazarded, no extravagant zeal led to



reckless positiveness, and imagination threw around his path no delusive glare; but good sense and modesty made him always moderate and mindful of due limits. Again, while true to himself, he was not isolated in his intellectual aims. On the contrary, his mind was open to the full influences of the age, and his heart beat responsively to the great impulses and longings with which humanity throughout Christendom was then instinct. The chief value, indeed, of these writings is to be found in the fact, that they are the answers of a sincere seeker to the questions which all the leading minds of the time were discussing throughout Europe. They are the observations of a patient student of the skies on this side of the ocean, and so may serve to determine by parallax the orbit of the truths whose light was then just discerned in the firmament.

In the very first sermon which Mr. Channing wrote, he showed the singular consistency of his inward nature by thus expressing the essential principle of all his after thoughts and teachings: "The end of life, God's one grand purpose, is, to prepare mankind for the holiness and blessedness of heaven by forming them to moral excellence on earth. Redemption is the recovery of man from sin, as the preparation for glory. And all Christian morals may be reduced to the one principle, and declared in one word, LOVE. God is love; Christ is love; the gospel is an exhibition of love; its aim is to transform our whole spirits into love. The perfection of the Divine system is revealed in the mutual dependencies which unite all creatures. All lean upon one another, and give while they receive support. No man is unnecessary; no man stands alone. God has brought us thus near to each other, that his goodness may be reflected from heart to heart. Holiness is light. We glorify God when by imitation we display his character. The good man manifests the beauty of God." Thus he struck the key-note of the symphony, in the evolving of whose melodious strains his whole life was to be passed.

The order adopted in arranging the following extracts is the one chosen by himself for the work which he was engaged in writing at the time of his death, and of which a full notice will be hereafter given. As it was his purpose, in that book, to sum up the results of his inquiries, and to justify his leading views, its general divisions will safely direct us in attempting to trace his upward path.

## SECTION FIRST.

## RELIGION.

1805. LOVE THE PRINCIPLE OF HARMONY IN THE UNIVERSE. "The Christian possesses a great advantage in the contemplation of nature. He beholds *unity* in the midst of *variety*. He looks round on the changing scenery, and in every leaf of the forest, every blade of grass, every hill, every valley, and every cloud of heaven, he discovers the traces of Divine benevolence. Creation is but a field spread before him for an infinitely varied display of *love*. This is the harmonizing principle which reduces to unity and simplicity the vast diversity of nature, — this is the perfection of the universe. It clothes in moral glory every object we contemplate. The Christian truly may be said to hear the music of the spheres. He hears suns and planets joining their melody in praise to their benignant Creator. His ear, and his alone, is tuned to this heavenly harmony. His soul is love."

1811. GOD OUR FATHER. "When we conceive of God as a pure Spirit, and dwell on his incommunicable perfections, of which we see no image or resemblance in any beings around us, he eludes the feeble vision of our minds. It is then almost impossible that the affections can be excited and centred upon him. Such views of God furnish us no object on which we can rest, as on a reality. Now the Scriptures invest this pure and infinite Spirit with a character, relations, and qualities which we can comprehend, — such as are continually displayed around us, such as constantly address and touch our hearts, such as we can revolve in thought and meditate upon with ease and delight, such as are attractive and promise happiness; and thus they furnish us the best and most effectual means for exciting and cherishing the love of God. Of all the interesting characters and relations in which the Scriptures, especially the books of the New Testament, exhibit the Supreme Being, that of *Father* is the most common, prominent, striking. . . .

"No character could bring God so nigh as this of *the Father*. There is no relation which we know so familiarly as the parental. What name recalls so many thoughts and feelings, so many favors and tender remembrances, as that of parent? The Scriptures, then, in giving this view of God, place him before us in a clear, intelligible light. We are not called to dwell on perfections which are utterly incomprehensible, the names of which are sounds in the ear, but excite no ideas in the mind, and which have no tendency to interest the heart. God is our Father. . . .

“I fear it has been the influence of many speculations of ingenious men on the Divine character to divest God of that paternal tenderness which is of all views most suited to touch the heart. I fear we have learnt insensibly to view him as possessing only a general benevolence, which he extends over his wide creation, — a benevolence neither very strong nor ardent, not descending to individuals, and not essential to the felicity of the Divine nature. Now this distant and almost indifferent benevolence will hardly seize on our affections. It may please us in moments of calm speculation. It will not inspire a love strong enough to curb our passions, to compose our sorrows, to influence our lives. For these ends, we need to have other views frequently suggested to us, — those views of God’s affection for us and for his wide family, which his parental relation to us suggests, and which the kindness of his providence compels us to receive.

“Let me now ask, why these views of God may not be cherished, and why we may not suppose that God has properly the feelings of a father towards us. It is objected, that the supposition implies that God is not infinitely happy in himself, but derives happiness from his creatures; and this derivation, we are told, is dishonorable to God. But I do not perceive that we dishonor God by believing that his creation is a real source of felicity to him, that he finds a real happiness in doing good, and in viewing with complacency obedient, virtuous, and happy children. To me there is no view of God more honorable than this. Is it not the character of a perfect man, that the happiness of others is his own, that he knows no higher joy than to confer and to witness felicity, that his heart responds to the feelings of those around him? And if this is perfection in man, can it be an imperfection in God? Do we, indeed, exalt God, when we represent him as unaffected by the state of his creatures? Next to ascribing malignity to him, what can we say worse of him than this, — that he looks on the joys and sorrows of his own creatures without joy and without pity? . . .

“We cannot see much to envy in the felicity of a being who has no feeling of interest and love extending beyond himself. Deprive God of the happiness of love, and we deprive him of that enjoyment which we have every reason to believe the purest and most inexhaustible in the universe.”

1811. THE MERCY AND JUSTICE OF GOD. “Mercy is an essential attribute of God, not an affection produced in him by a foreign cause. His blessings are free, and bestowed from a real interest in his creatures, — not purchased from him, and bestowed by



another on those whose welfare he disregards. He really loves mankind; and this is the great motive, first cause, and highest spring of their redemption. Thus I have endeavored to place before you Divine goodness in the glory in which it shines in Scripture.

“But I must not stop here. This doctrine, whilst obscured by some, is carried to excess by others. There are those who, when they hear of the essential and infinite mercy of God towards even the sinful, imagine that God has no aversion towards sin, and cannot punish. Unhappily the minds of men are prone to run to extremes. They cannot be driven from one sentiment without vibrating to its opposite. . . .

“To guard against such a perversion of the doctrine I have enforced, let me repeat, that his mercy is not an undistinguishing fondness; that whilst he compassionates the offending, and has appointed methods for their reformation and forgiveness, he is unchangeably the enemy of sin; that his very character, as the universal Father, requires him to punish and humble the disobedient, selfish, unjust, proud, and impure, to redress every principle and practice opposed to the order and happiness and perfection of his creatures.”

1811. REGENERATION. “A religious character is an acquisition, and implies a change; a change which requires labor and prayer, which requires aid and strength from heaven; a change so great and important, that it deserves to be called a *new birth*. The Christian is a new man. Once the dictates of conscience might have been heard; now they are obeyed. Once an occasional gratitude might have shed a transient glow through his heart; now the Divine goodness is a cherished thought, and he labors to requite it by an obedient life. Once his passions were his lords; now he bows to the authority, and waits to hear the will, of God. Once human opinion was his guide, and human favor the reward he proposed; now he feels that another eye is upon him, that his heart and life are naked before God, and to approve himself to this righteous and unerring witness and judge is his highest ambition. Once he was ready to repine and despond when his wishes and labors were crossed; now he sees a providence in life's vicissitudes, the discipline of a father in his sufferings, and bears his burdens, and performs his duties, with cheerful resignation to Him who assigns them. Once he was sufficiently satisfied with himself, or unwilling to feel his deficiencies; now he is humble, conscious of having sinned, desirous to discover his errors, contrite in his acknowledgments, earnest in his application to Divine mercy, and resolute in his opposition to temptation. Once the thought of



a Saviour suffering for human pardon, and rising from the dead to confer immortality, excited little interest; now the promises, love, cross, and resurrection of Jesus come home to him with power, and awaken gratitude and hope. Once he lived chiefly for himself; now he has learnt to love his fellow-beings with a sincere and an efficient kindness, to lose sight of himself in the prosecution of benevolent designs, to feel for the misery, for the sins, of those around him, and to endure labors and sacrifices, that he may give relief to the frail body, and peace and health to the immortal mind. To conclude, — once he was alive to injury, and suffered anger and revenge to direct his treatment of an enemy; now his indignation is tempered by mercy, and he is ready to forgive. . . .

“Still, to be Christians, all have much to put off, to subdue, to correct, to renounce; and all have much to put on, to acquire, to cherish. So that the Christian character may still be called a second birth. The best Christians can ordinarily look back to the period, when they were governed by inferior and unworthy principles; when the world was more powerful than conscience and God, or at least when the sense of duty was comparatively faint and un influential. By the precepts, doctrines, motives, promises of Christianity, and by the secret influences of God’s Spirit on the heart, they have been raised to a faith, hope, and love which may be called a new life. They have been born again. . . .

“The fact is, there is a general resemblance between birth and the production of the Christian character. By both, a being is brought into a new state, and a most interesting change is produced in his conduct. Here, indeed, the analogy stops. The difference between the two changes which are here compared proves that the mode and circumstances of their production must be very different. Scripture and experience lead us to believe that the change which makes a man a Christian is *gradual, progressive*. The Scriptures are very far from speaking of regeneration and conversion in the language of human systems, as effects which take place in a moment. On the contrary, regeneration and conversion are spoken of as if they were taking place through the whole of life. The Christian is continually experiencing the change which is expressed by these and similar terms.”

1810. LOVE OF GOD. “The love of God which the Scriptures call us to cherish, and which we are formed to attain and enjoy, is not a blind, irrational sentiment. It is founded on the clearest views of the understanding, on the abundant evidence we possess, that there is an Infinite Being, in whom reside wisdom, and power,

and goodness, without beginning, or end, or any limit ; who sustains to us the near and tender relation of Creator, Father, Benefactor, and Lord ; whose commands are equitable and kind ; and who is willing to pardon our offences on the terms of repentance. It is the offering of the heart to this best of beings ; it venerates his majesty, esteems and adores his excellence, is grateful for his goodness, rejoices in his felicity and in the felicity of his creation, implores his forgiveness, resigns itself to his providence, and desires to do his will ; and is this an affection to be decried and renounced ? In the love of God are united the most delightful affections we exercise towards our fellow-beings, — filial love, thankfulness to benefactors, reverence for the great and good, sympathy with the happy, and universal good-will. These pure affections all meet in the love of God ; and are refined, exalted, and rendered sources of inconceivably high delight, in consequence of the infinite amiableness and superiority of the Being whom we love.

“ Do not confound this love with the ravings of enthusiasm. It is a calm, mild, reverential sentiment, improving the understanding, subduing the passions, giving serenity to affliction, and uniformity to the whole character and life. Do not confound it with a morose, churlish, and censorious bigotry. It is a happy, cheerful principle ; accepting blessings with a gratitude which improves them, delighting in all God’s works, and seeing him in all, rejoicing in his providence, and hoping immortality from his mercy, regarding all men as his children, and discerning with pleasure all the excellences with which he has endowed them. Can that heart be gloomy, which adores and loves the infinitely wise and merciful God, and views him as a father, — which associates him with all its joys and pains, with all the works of nature, and all the changes of life, — which feels him near in danger and in death, and which hopes from his mercy a blessed immortality ? No ! It is not the love of God which sheds gloom and despair, but a very different principle. True love of God illuminates the darkness of the present life, and is a foretaste of the felicity of heaven.”

1808. THE HAPPINESS OF BEING LOVED BY GOD. “ In considering the great happiness of possessing the Divine favor, I first observe that they who love God must derive an inexpressible joy from the mere consciousness that they are beloved by such a Being, without regard to the benefits which flow from this favor.

“ The Christian views God as the best, the most lovely, the most venerable of all beings. He sees, that to this glorious Being he and all things owe their existence ; that the universe is full of God ; and

that all happiness, from the rapture of archangels down to the faintest pleasures of animal life, is his unmerited and constant gift. With these exalted, delightful views of God, how full of joy is the conviction of the Christian, that this God looks on him with complacency and approbation! His heart is softened by the condescension of the infinite Deity, who notices with pleasure his feeble attempts to serve and to imitate him. He would not resign the honor of such friendship for the empire of the universe.

“My friends, did your hearts never beat with joy, when you have seen the eye of a beloved and revered friend and benefactor fixed on you with tenderness and approbation; and can you be wholly insensible to the pleasure of him who feels the presence of God wherever he goes, and is able to say, ‘The infinite Parent of the universe is my approving friend’? Can any one be so blind as not to see that here is a source of unfailing, of increasing happiness? To the real Christian, the Divine character continually becomes more and more amiable. All creation, all the events of life, tend to endear to him his God. But the more he loves God, the more he must delight in the consciousness of his favor. The more his conceptions of the Supreme Being are enlarged, the more his heart must thrill at the thought, that this Being looks on him with the tenderness of friendship. You who know not from experience the pure and joyful sensations which are here described, can you form no conception of the happiness of that man who looks round with adoring humility on the immensity of creation, on the endless variety of Divine blessings, and in the midst of his reverence and gratitude feels that the universal Parent, though encircled in his majesty, thinks of him continually, despises not his humble offering, is well pleased with his sacrifices of praise and love, and bears towards him an increasing, an unbounded affection? . . .

“Is there one who is wholly insensible to the blessedness of that man who has liberty of access to God, approaches him with confidence, speaks to him as a friend, spreads before him all his wants, believes that he is heard, and knows that he shall advance continually nearer and nearer to his Father, and be introduced to his presence in a purer world? These are the indescribable enjoyments of the man who is reconciled to God. The Christian who views God as his approving friend needs no compulsion to bring him into the Divine presence. The thought, that God condescends to regard him with a favorable eye, swells his heart with unutterable gratitude, and gives new ardor and confidence to his devotions. He no longer worships with cold formality a distant Deity, but casts him-



self into the arms of an ever-present Father. He no longer shrinks from God as a being whom he has offended. He may, indeed, shed tears, but they are filial tears; he may blush, but it is from ingenuous shame, called forth by unmerited love; he feels that the Father whom he has offended has requited his guilt with infinite tenderness, and the recollection of his sins only gives a new glow and sensibility to the exercise of his devotion. What happy communion necessarily results from a consciousness of the favor of God! This consciousness disperses all those fears which haunt the guilty mind. The thought of God, which once was painful, once filled us with apprehension of judgment, now becomes our highest joy, the centre of all our thoughts, all our hopes, all our affections. We glow with new sentiments, new anticipations. We feel a new dignity in our nature, when we conceive of ourselves as being the friends of God."

1805. GROWTH IN HOLINESS. "True religion is not to be measured by subservience to a farther end; but is *the end of ends* itself. It is the health, purity, vigor, rectitude, of the soul; and can too much of these be possessed? Is there an attainable degree of them which we should not desire and pursue? Can God, the infinite fountain of good, — whose glory creation reflects, and before whom creation is as nothing, — can he be too much loved, revered, or praised? Can we ever render him all the honor which is his due? Shall we ever embrace his whole character and government, and have reason to restrain our views and affections, for want of new excellence to behold and admire? . . .

"Let us feel that the authority and excellence of God claim all our hearts, all which we now are, all which we can be; that it is the glory of the hosts of heaven to be conformed to his image and his law; that we can approach those higher orders only by growing in piety and goodness; that religion is the excellence of the intellectual nature in all its varieties and degrees; that this is the only true improvement of our nature, and that we can never rise too high; that according to our growth in these will be our rank in the scale of existence; and, in a word, that by these alone we approach God and prove ourselves his children. . . .

"Religion is the rectification of the soul; it is inward health; it is the direction of affection to the most interesting objects. It consists of feelings and dispositions which include everything generous, disinterested, sympathetic, and pure. It is in its very nature peace. . . .

"If, indeed, there were narrow limits to the Divine nature and



perfection, and scanty happiness to be promoted in his system, then the joy of extended piety and goodness might be changed into sorrow, at the discovery of the imperfection and narrowness of the objects. But the infinity of God and of his designs and government is an assurance that the most fervent affections shall not be disappointed. His character invites the warmest friendship, the most exalted complacency and esteem. His condescension encourages unbounded confidence. His goodness animates unbounded hope. . . . .

“What an argument is it for growth in religion, that by it we shall be raised to angelic purity and happiness! What a commendation is it of that excellence which the Christian is called to cultivate, that heaven holds nothing more precious, — that heaven consists only in superior degrees of this excellence of soul!”

1805. SIGNS OF GROWTH. “We are not growing in religion, if we make piety a substitute for kindness, or kindness a substitute for piety; if we hope by generosity to atone for extravagance or lust, or by honesty to atone for avarice. We are not growing in religion, if we are satisfied with performing occasional acts which suggest themselves to our minds, but make no exertion to learn how we may pursue the whole will of God. We are not growing in religion, if the thought of living habitually in any omission or any positive disobedience sits easy upon us, and makes no painful impression. If, on the contrary, our consciences testify that God’s goodness and majesty excite us to seek *universal obedience*; if in our hearts we feel that every branch of known duty is the object of our attention and pursuit; if we can hope that not one sin of heart or life is habitually allowed and knowingly indulged,— then we may expect to grow in all excellence. Then the various duties which we seek to perform will confirm one another. Our temperance will invigorate our love, and this our piety, and piety will add stability to both. In a life in which all duties meet, there is a harmony which is favorable to all. One spirit circulates through all. They grow like the limbs of a well-proportioned body. . . . .

“When our duty and our happiness shall entirely coincide, then we shall be perfect beings; and in proportion as we approach this state, we approach perfection. . . . .

“When one is growing in religion, in excellence, he converts more and more the common pursuits of life into means of piety and goodness, and makes them the way to heaven. The spiritual temper gives more and more its own color to all objects, and influences every choice of the mind. The soul becomes more and more

impregnated with piety and love, and sees and pursues all things under the influence of these principles. . . .

“If we are growing in Christian excellence, we shall become more simple in our characters. We shall be the same everywhere. The love of God and man will diffuse itself more and more through our common looks and words, emotions and actions. We shall feel this temper at home and abroad. It will influence us when no eye sees us, as well as when we are excited by numbers. It will lead us peculiarly to secret, unobserved performance of duty, to habitual acts of kindness and devotion which lie beyond the notice of man. We shall not only be more serene in provocation, more cheerful in affliction, more moderate in prosperity, but everything will take a hue from religion, and lead to the exercise of pious, humble, disinterested affections. . . .

“If we are growing in religion, we shall make advance to this *simplicity* of heart, this harmonious, tranquil state of mind. We shall act more from *one principle*, act more and more for *one end*; and hence our feelings and actions will be more consistent, uniform; the color of our souls and lives will become more single; and we shall exhibit one form to the world and to our own consciences.”

1804. HARMONY OF HOLINESS. “As no holy temper can exist in separation from any branch of moral excellence, it follows that particular actions are to be approved only when they evince a general conformity of heart to the law of God. There is a beauty in real religion. All its sentiments and views and desires are harmonious; all its actions are guided by one light, and animated by one spirit. It is founded on the crucifixion of selfish affections, and it flows out in good-will to God and man, and in complacent regard to all excellence in heaven and in earth. It has no desire to avoid particular duties, for its happiness springs from the simplicity and consistency of its principles and pursuits; and its serenity would be destroyed by the counteraction of holy and sinful dispositions.

“If, my friends, you are animated by real religion, it will appear in the beautiful and harmonious exercise of all holy dispositions. You will possess a principle of devotion and of impartial benevolence, which will eradicate the debasing and enfeebling lusts and passions of your souls; which will dispose you to blend your interests with those of other beings; which will unite you with the universe, and flow out in tenderness to man, and submission to God. Trust not in any single virtue. If your religion be genuine,

it will draw in its train the whole of moral excellence. Search, then, whether in all respects you are conformed to the law of God."

1805. FUTURE REWARDS OF USEFULNESS. "One great end of the Deity in forming such an extensive connection and dependence in his system undoubtedly is, that he may give room to the benevolent exertions of his children. He peculiarly delights in communicating happiness through the good exertions of his creatures. He has so constituted the universe, that its happiness flows from the co-operation of its various parts, from benevolent reciprocation, and the mutual dispensing of blessings. God, therefore, may be considered as governing, not so much to impart good immediately, as to bless the good exertions of the benevolent. Hence we see that every benevolent deed will produce by its success peace and joy to the heart from which it flows; for there is One infinitely wise and powerful, who has taken upon himself the care of advancing every labor of love; the good heart, therefore, will forever be called to rejoice in the happiness which it has produced.

"Why may we not suppose that the blessedness which will be enjoyed in the heavenly world will be the result of the joint exertion of all good beings; and that each will have the felicity of knowing that by his humble labors the blessings of God have contributed to this abundant increase? In the present state, indeed, we see but little of the consequences of actions. Often the benevolent seem to labor in vain; seldom do they witness a harvest proportioned to their desires; and hence they are in danger of fainting in well-doing. But the scene which now meets our eyes is narrow in comparison with the mighty system of God. We know not the modes in which he operates. We cannot take in the innumerable ways in which he makes the labors of the good conducive to the end they propose. At the great consummation of all things, the darkness will be dissipated, and the good will reap. *Then* they will see their prayers, their toils, their liberal contributions, their exhortations, all their various exertions for the interests of men, and for the kingdom of the Redeemer, improved by infinite wisdom to accomplish the happiest ends. They will see that their good works failed to accomplish the object they desired, only that they might conduce to greater good. They will see happiness existing and destined to exist and to increase forever, which they were the honored instruments of promoting. They will be hailed by some grateful voice, ascribing to their prayers and exertions the attainment of heavenly blessedness.



They will see the connection of their labors with the prosperity and triumphs of the kingdom of God. And joy will fill their hearts at finding that they have not lived in vain, — that while, perhaps, they have labored in stations too humble for the notice of man, they have been workers together with God, and been permitted to lay the foundation of felicity which shall never end. . . .

“ True benevolence is not happy in itself; it is happy in the felicity of other beings; and in proportion to its strength we shall ardently desire to attain to a state of existence in which we may behold and promote the highest good, may grow in goodness, become members of an active society warmed with purest benevolence, and be entirely devoted to the designs of the merciful God. The prospect of eternal life must be inconceivably more dear to a benevolent heart than to any other being, because this heart is fixed on an object so glorious and extensive, that it wants an eternity to enjoy and pursue it. Take away the rewards of the gospel from the benevolent soul, let him see no spheres of usefulness beyond the grave, let him see all his labors confined to the narrow sphere of this changing world, and his heart will sink and grow cold. There will be no object large enough for him to embrace. The good heart naturally allies itself with eternity. It is its nature to expand its views. Let it behold a kingdom of endless and increasing glory under the government of infinite love, and let it be invited to press forward to this kingdom, and its benevolence will give it vigor to pursue the prize.

“ It is true, indeed, that if the common conceptions of the world respecting the rewards of the gospel were just, the benevolent heart could not pursue them. Men make a heaven of pleasures in no respect congenial to the heart of benevolence. A good man can be quickened only by the prospect of a future world in which goodness will be exercised and displayed. Jesus will reward his followers, not by introducing them to a paradise of sensual delight and to bowers of undisturbed repose; but by enlarging their faculties, shedding new light into their minds, and welcoming them to a state where every excellence will be confirmed, — where they will behold God as a friend face to face, and approach the Divine majesty with new affection, — where they will accomplish the Divine purposes with increasing vigor, delight, and success, and receive and communicate more happiness in an hour or a day than they have done in the whole of their lives on earth. Here is an object worth ambition. Here is an immortality the thought of which should kindle every hope and desire, and quicken to the practice of universal piety.”



## 1810. MAN'S SPIRITUAL PERFECTION THE END OF PROVIDENCE.

“By these obvious remarks we are led to the very important truth, that Providence has a principal regard to the mind of man, that divine principle by which man is distinguished above all the other inhabitants of the earth, and is rendered so capable of progression in truth, virtue, and happiness. To the Infinite Mind nothing can be so dear as *mind*. There is nothing over which he must watch with such affection. To a wise and good Creator no object can be so important as souls capable of goodness and wisdom; and to form, expand, enlighten, purify, invigorate, and bless these souls must be the great end of his administration. The perfection of mind, or of intelligent creation, is the great end of God.

“Do you ask in what this perfection consists? I answer, in *knowledge*, in *love*, and in *activity*. That mind which has a wide range of thought, knows much of God and of his creation, and loves what it knows, — which is bound by a strong affection to its Creator and its fellow-beings, and acts as well as loves, — which puts forth all its powers, employs all its knowledge, in the service of God, and in blessing his creatures, — that mind is a perfect mind; and it is as happy as it is perfect. Its happiness partakes of the purity and serenity of the Divine felicity. Now this I conceive is the end of God, to bring his rational offspring to this perfect and blessed state, to give them the widest, clearest, and brightest views, to give them the strongest, purest, most disinterested love, and to form them to the most vigorous and efficient exertion of all their powers in the promotion of the best designs.”

## SECTION SECOND.

## HUMAN NATURE.

1811. PRINCIPLE OF RELIGION IN HUMAN NATURE. “We have not merely capacities of attaining just ideas of God; there is a foundation in our nature for feeling and loving, as well as discerning, his character. Let us dwell on this point. In human nature there is a sensibility to what is great and good. There is no man whose heart has not sometimes been moved, when he has heard of illustrious deeds, of pure, exalted, disinterested goodness, of an enlarged and vigorous mind employed in vast and noble designs. Now this moral sensibility is a preparative for the love of God, an impulse towards him, and evidently designed to be a bond of union between him and the human heart. In his character alone can this love of excellence find an adequate object and full gratification. We represent to ourselves higher excellences than

we discern in the best around us, and want a purer and more disinterested friend than earth can give. God is the only being without stain or blemish, without excess or defect. He is unerring wisdom, unsullied purity, unfailing faithfulness, impartial rectitude, and unbounded, unwearied, all-ennobling, universal goodness. Are we so constituted, that these qualities, when dimly seen in imperfect man, impress the heart, and shall we not direct our minds and hearts to this Being, in whom they are concentrated in infinite perfection, and shine with unclouded splendor?

“This sensibility to excellence should be cherished by us, and employed to unite us to God. Have you ever felt the heart glow, whilst you have contemplated the true and good? Then you will acknowledge that this is one of the happiest, most improving, and ennobling sentiments of which we are capable. We not only enjoy, but catch the excellence we admire. That mind which is often directed towards the best of beings will not only possess a happiness peculiarly pure and refined; it will approach the goodness it loves, it will catch a ray of the celestial glory, it will be changed into the same image. God cannot enter the heart without leaving traces of himself. It might seem presumptuous to speak of man as being a partaker of the Divine nature, did not Scripture employ this bold and elevated language. But this is really the happiness of him who contemplates God in his venerable and amiable perfections, until he is warmed with love. Why, then, do we not love God? . . . .

“God is, in the strictest propriety of language, our Father. What is the love of God, then, but a refined filial affection? And this is an affection which we drew in with our first breath, and which was implanted at the very dawn of our being. From this view of love to God, we may see that the foundation of it is laid, that the heart is in a degree prepared for it, by the earliest feelings. We were learning this duty as soon as we began to learn anything. This bond of union with God was formed in our cradle; why, then, do we not follow this indication of the end for which we were formed? Why do we not lift up our hearts to our Heavenly Father? Does not the sentiment of filial reverence and love towards such a parent approve itself to our minds, our consciences, as reasonable, becoming, fair, and lovely? Is man ever more ennobled than when he feels his high and near relation as a child of the infinite God?”

1807. THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE. “If, indeed, God designed to give as much ease and rest to rational beings as possible, — if this were the happiest state, — we might wonder at many vicissitudes

which we behold. But God has the better end in view, of training up the mind to attention, observation, perseverance, and efficiency ; and in this view all those changes are good which disturb our indolence, which compel us to look forward and to form and execute long and laborious plans. Even danger is sometimes the best state for the individual. Apprehensions of great evil may be necessary excitements. This is not mere speculation. We everywhere see the happy influence of the difficulties, exigencies, hardships, and even dangers of life. We see minds, if I may so speak, of a stronger texture formed by scenes of trial. Those habits of sound judgment, of calm deliberation, of steady effort, of bold, unconquerable perseverance, which we so much admire, are the effects of situations in which men feel that they have much at stake, that they are exposed to serious evils, that they must act with prudence and vigor, or they will certainly suffer."

1810. THE BLESSINGS OF HARDSHIP. "Let none consider this state of things as severe, as reflecting on the goodness of the Creator. The difficulties of our state are among its best blessings. The distance at which good objects are placed, and the obstacles which intervene, are the means by which Providence rouses, quickens, invigorates, expands, all our powers. These form the school in which our minds and hearts are trained. Difficulty and hardship bind us more closely to objects. We love more ardently what we have suffered to attain, and enjoy nothing so exquisitely as what we have pursued through calamity and danger. It is in such pursuits, when we endure and labor for ends which conscience and religion enjoin, that our whole nature is called forth and perfected. The heart gains new ardor, the understanding new clearness and vigor. A delightful consciousness of rectitude sustains us even if we fail, and gives a rapture to success. Especially if the ends for which we toil and suffer are of a benevolent character, do we receive a reward which swallows up our sacrifices and pains. The virtuous friendships which grow out of such labors, the glow of affection with which we are embraced by the good and holy, the consciousness of acting in union with Jesus Christ, and the excellent of all ages and all worlds, the sympathy, and approbation, and love which we excite, are indeed luxuries of the heart which cannot be too dearly purchased. Never does conscience speak to us in such cheering tones ; never does our Heavenly Father look on us with such approbation ; never are we so dear to those whose love it is indeed an honor and privilege to enjoy ; never does our nature seem so exalted, so worthy of its Author, so worthy of immortality, as when



we devote ourselves to the best interests of our fellow-beings, and, undismayed by danger, unseduced by pleasure, unwearied by hardship, unprovoked by contempt, and reposing a humble confidence in God, the originator and rewarder of all good exertions, press forward with every power to the holy end we have proposed. Who, then, will repine at the hardships of a good life? These prove, refine, and exalt the human character. Ease, indulgence, luxury, sloth, are the sources of misery. They benumb the mind, quench the warm emotions of the heart, sever man from his Creator and his fellow, and make him a poor, sordid, selfish, wretched being."

1811. DUTY OF SEEKING TRUTH. "It is the great excellence of man, that he is capable of knowledge, — that he not only receives impressions from outward things, but can compare and combine what he sees, can learn the properties, causes, and influences of surrounding objects, can discern the future in the present, and rise from visible nature to its invisible Author. He is formed for the acquisition and application of truth; and his happiness and excellence very much depend on the truths he perceives. A mind which is open to truth, which sees things as they are, which forms right judgments of its own duties and condition, and of the character and rights of all with whom it is connected, is immeasurably exalted above the narrow, dark, confused intellect, which sees everything as through a mist, gives to everything the color of its own feelings, confines itself to what coincides with its wishes, contents itself with superficial views, and thus perpetually falls into errors and misapprehensions. . . .

"Am I asked in what this honesty of mind consists, or what is included in it? I answer, — would we be honest, we must fill ourselves with a deep sense of the *infinite value of truth*, with a desire to see everything as it is, to form a right judgment on every subject; and we must labor that this desire may exceed in strength all those passions which so often darken and blind the understanding. A supreme love of truth, a disposition to make all sacrifices to it, and to follow it, though it lead to contempt, loss, and danger, — this is the very essence of honesty of mind; and where this exists, it will induce impartial and serious inquiry.

"Our honesty of mind bears an exact proportion to the patience, steadiness, and resolution with which we *inquire*. When an opinion is proposed to us which does not agree with our past conceptions, we must not reject it as soon as proposed, and, to save ourselves the trouble of inquiring and the shame of retracting, say that on this point we have made up our mind; but, on the contrary, under



a sense of fallibility, we must be willing to review our opinions, to examine afresh their foundations, and to receive any new light which our opponent may throw on the subject. We must be very careful, too, not to enter on the discussion with a previous determination to form only one opinion. This is the case with many. They profess to be willing to inquire; and yet they are fully satisfied, before they begin, as to the point at which they will stop. But this is only a mockery of examination; and we may as well spare ourselves all trouble, and hold fast our present opinions without pretending to sift them. Our duty is to enter on the consideration of every subject with a sincere desire to learn the truth, and to renounce whatever errors we may have imbibed. For this end, we should meet the subject fairly, look it fully, if I may say so, in the face, and give ourselves time to examine it with deliberation. We must not cast over it a glance, and from unmanly sloth pretend that we see all which can be seen, and hurry to a conclusion before we have laid a foundation for correct judgment. We must not catch at arguments which support the sentiment we approve, and say these are unanswerable, and refuse to look further. We are very apt to shut our eyes, under pretence that there is nothing to be seen, at the very moment that new light is breaking in upon us. Unhappily, this new light detects old errors, and therefore it is that we eagerly exclude it. Instead of this partial view, we must labor to attain as full and comprehensive a knowledge of the subject as possible. We must invite evidence from all quarters, open our ears to all that can be urged on both sides, and give attention to every argument proportioned to its importance. In this especially consists an honest inquiry for the truth. All our passions and prejudices incline us to hear only one party. Would we be honest, we must extend our views, and weigh with seriousness what is urged in favor of opinions we dislike. We too easily take it for granted that an opponent has nothing to urge in his favor. Let us first hear, and then decide.

“After this dispassionate attention to all the evidence within our reach, the time for *judging* has come. Perhaps our inquiries have left us in a state of doubt on subjects where before we were confident. In this case we must be careful not to express a stronger belief of a sentiment than we really feel. Perhaps it will be expected that we shall use the language of decision. But our language should ever be the faithful expression of our conviction. When we affect greater confidence in a sentiment than we possess, we become interested in bringing our mind into this state of confidence, and shall almost inevitably be led to practise imposition on ourselves, as well as on others. Perhaps, in consequence of this

inquiry, we shall come to a decision, but to a very different decision from what others wish and expect. This is a trying condition; but we must show our sense of the sacredness of truth by steadfastly adhering to it, wherever we are called to express our sentiments. Nothing should tempt us to belie the convictions of our minds. It is better to be forsaken and renounced by men, than to seek their friendship by affecting compliance with what seem to us errors. We are not called to be forward, rude, intemperate, in expressing our sentiments. We ought to be prudent; but Christian prudence is never to be separated from Christian simplicity and sincerity. When called to act, we should uniformly espouse what we deem to be truth, and in this cause should be willing to suffer. . . .

“This is honesty of mind, — a most noble spirit, — the distinction of a truly good and great man. It is a quality of character without which the most splendid talents are of little avail; for then intellectual vigor may prove a curse, and may only help to plunge us deeper into error. This fairness of mind is not a very showy virtue, especially when it is exercised in the common concerns of life; but perhaps it includes more magnanimity, courage, and self-denial than any other virtue. Multitudes have dared to face death in the field of battle, who have yet wanted strength and spirit to oppose their own and others’ prejudices. . . .

“This virtue will especially give inward peace. The man of an honest mind has a consciousness of the truth of his convictions, which no other man can have. He learns to distinguish truth with an ease peculiar to himself. Truth offers herself, if I may so speak, in her native simplicity and beauty to an upright mind. . . .

“The fair and upright mind dwells in a region of light. Conscious of sincerity, it does not wish to hide itself from its own inspection, or from the inspection of God. It is conscious of his approbation, and confidently hopes, through his mercy, to be at length released from all error, and to attain pure and unclouded vision in his heavenly kingdom.”

1810. HUMILITY AND THE DIGNITY OF MAN. “Humility is that impartial, just, and upright state of mind in which we view ourselves as we are. Humility has sometimes been described as a disposition to deny ourselves what we have, to think worse of ourselves than we really are, to take a lower seat than belongs to us. But Christianity is a religion of truth, and never calls us to practise deception on ourselves. It does not ask us to spend useless tears and regrets on sins we have never committed, or to apply to ourselves terms of degradation and reproach which we have not

deserved. There is no firm foundation of religion but truth. To ascribe to ourselves imaginary imperfections and crimes is the mark of an abject and timid mind, and gives little reason to hope from us that improvement which is the great end of Christian humility. . . . .

“It is a duty to estimate highly the *nature* which God has given. It should be regarded with reverence, rather than contempt. Our danger is, that we shall think of it too meanly, not too highly. We ought to think of this nature soberly, indeed, but still to attach to it a high importance. Man was formed in the image of God, and, notwithstanding the unhappy change which has taken place in his state, he has yet capabilities of excellence which show him to be a noble work of the Creator. There are yet in him powers of thought and action, a range of intellect, an ardor of feeling, a tenderness of conscience, a sensibility to what is right, which entitle man to respect. There are yet in him many indications of a being formed for the highest happiness, the happiness of wisdom, piety, and goodness. There are many testimonies, too, that man is not forsaken by his Maker. There is an indulgent providence extended over him; there is a liberality in the supply of his wants, there is a provision for the improvement of his faculties, which prove that he is yet an interesting object in the sight of God. Yet more, we have an evidence of the most affecting kind to the value of human nature. God has given his own Son, — a being respecting whose nature, perhaps, revelation communicates no precise ideas, but whom we are yet taught to view as sustaining a peculiar relation to the infinite Father, and peculiarly beloved by him, — he has given this only-begotten Son to perform for us the kindest offices, to sustain towards us the most interesting relation, — that of saviour, friend, guide, and giver of eternal life. He has sent this beloved Son to take our nature, to become one of us, in the human form to display the virtues of heaven, and, by his promises, example, and aid, to inspire the same virtues into the hearts of mankind.

“Here is enough to attest the worth of our nature. Here we are assured that man is capable of the greatest, best, and most honorable endowments; that he can resemble God; that he is designed for immortality; that abodes in heaven are provided for his reception; that the society of that better world are ready to welcome him as a sharer of their excellence and happiness. Consider man as a favored child of God, united by the tie of brotherhood to the Son of God, called to an immortal life, destined to endure and improve through all ages, to extend his views and affections, to fill a wider and a wider sphere, and to perform more



and more noble services in the universe, through an endless existence; and surely such a being is not to be viewed with contempt. There is something sacred in that spiritual nature which the breath of God has quickened, and which the blood of Jesus has been shed to cleanse, refine, and make forever happy.

“These views of human nature are not only warranted by Scripture, but I think an acquaintance with our race will lead a reflecting and pious mind to cherish the same hopes. We are sometimes permitted to behold humanity in so delightful a form, adorned with such virtues, exalted by such vigor of thought and such ardor of affection, so dead to self and so alive to all other beings, so superior, yet so unassuming, exerting an influence so beneficent, cheering, consoling, so resigned and devoted to God, and so sustained by the hope of heaven, so arrayed in intellectual and moral glory, that we have, as it were, a pledge of the height which man is to attain. Humility does not check these views, but rather calls us to cherish them, to cast our eyes forward to the glory and honor with which humanity is to be crowned, to form large and generous hopes, to burn with a strong desire for this elevated state. It is by feeding on these sentiments that the mind is expanded, fortified, and impelled to excellence. It is by this hope we are saved. This hope makes us to become what it promises.”

### SECTION THIRD.

#### CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

1811. CHRIST A GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE. “There are some who are so desirous to magnify the justice of God, that they represent him as viewing our race with unmingled indignation, and speak as if his love towards man were excited, and even purchased, by the sacrifice of his Son. In this way the unthinking are led to associate the ideas of an awful justice with the Father, whilst they clothe the Son with the delightful and attractive attributes of mercy, and consider him as peculiarly the source of their deliverance. I do not say that it is the intention of any to make this impression. I only state the fact, that such impressions are produced by the unguarded language used on this subject.

“I fear that false conceptions have arisen on this subject, from the habit of speaking of our pardon and future happiness as ‘*purchased for us by the death of Christ.*’ The effect of such language is to fix in many minds the idea that our Saviour has offered to God an equivalent, — a price for our happiness, — and thus obtained for



us what would have been reluctantly bestowed, had we been left to the mercy of God. Many, indeed, do not carry this language so far ; but they still feel as if forgiveness and future happiness were a *purchase*, and therefore not altogether the *gift* of free and pure benevolence. I will not say that it is improper to speak of our deliverance as purchased by Christ, because we usually speak in this manner of blessings which have been procured for us by the labor and love of other beings. But I am certain that this language never should be used, if the tendency is to weaken our convictions of the great truth, that God is moved with compassion towards us by the essential benignity of his nature ; that of himself he is inclined to save our race ; that his blessings flow to us from a sincere desire to bless us ; and that pardon and life are free gifts, — not something paid for, — not something obtained for us from the severe justice of the Father by the compassion of the Son. . . .

“ According to the customs of the age when the Scriptures were written, it was very common to redeem men from captivity by paying a price. The blood or death of Christ, which is the instrument of our deliverance from the captivity of sinful affections and of death, is therefore called a price, a ransom ; and we are said to be bought by it. This is the plain, obvious meaning of Scripture, and so far from representing our blessings as bought for us from God by another, it represents God as buying or purchasing us, that he may shed on us his richest blessings. The mercy of God has not been excited towards us by the mediation of the Son ; but his mercy preceded, appointed this mediation, and gives it its efficacy.”

1812. THE LIFE OF CHRIST. “ Among the truths relating to Jesus Christ, which should be preached, I have mentioned the *holiness of his life*. Let me here observe, that, from the large portion of the Gospels which is taken up in relating the life and actions of our Saviour, I cannot but think that preaching should be often directed to this subject. I cannot but think that this most delightful part of the Christian system — the *life* which Jesus led, the *character* which he expressed — has been too much overlooked. The controversies relating to the precise dignity of his person have drawn attention from the holy and heavenly spirit which is everywhere discovered in the simple history of the Evangelists. The life of Jesus, as drawn in the Gospels, has been pronounced, perhaps with truth, the *strongest evidence* of his gospel, more impressive to a good mind even than the miracles. This, I think, may be affirmed with truth, that, if we would learn perfect goodness, if we wish to warm our hearts with the love of it, we can adopt

no method so effectual as the study, the frequent contemplation, of the life of Jesus."

1810. CHARACTER OF CHRIST. "Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a peculiar sense, the temple of the Divinity, the brightest image of his glory. In seeing him we see the Father. On this account it is delightful to contemplate him. It is delightful to think that his mildness, compassion, forbearance, and unwearied goodness are beams, reflections, of the character of the universal Father. No other manifestation is so suited to teach us that God is love.

"It is also interesting to contemplate Jesus Christ, as in him are displayed, in the brightest forms, all the virtues and excellences of human nature. He, and he alone, is the perfect man, an unerring standard; and it is in contemplation of Jesus that we can best learn the glory for which our nature is designed, that we shall best learn to love and aspire after excellence. . . .

"It is a kind ordination of God that the evidence of Christianity should be a growing evidence. When we begin our inquiries into the truth of Christianity, we are first impressed with the miraculous works of Christ, those exertions of divine power which prove that the Father was in him, that he was commissioned from heaven. In proportion as we attend to the subject, a new source of evidence springs up and brings new conviction to our minds. In the moral character of Jesus we see a miracle more striking than the most stupendous work of a physical nature. We see in brighter and clearer light the impressions and evidences of a sincere, upright, devout, and most benevolent heart. We see a character most original and yet most consistent; such as the Evangelists could never have feigned, such as impostors would never have imagined, but which is exactly suited to the wants and miseries of man, and to our highest conceptions of the Divinity.

"If from the contemplation of this character we are so blest as to imbibe the spirit of Jesus, our conviction of his excellence and sincerity acquires new vigor. Every attainment in purity and benevolence opens our minds to behold and enjoy yet more of the benignity and glory of the Saviour. We feel a new delight in studying his history, in tracing his life. We feel an accordance between our best and purest sentiments and the conduct and instructions of Christ, and we find these invigorated as our knowledge of his character is enlarged. We perceive ourselves growing more and more like God; we perceive our narrow and sensual hearts expanding with pure benevolence; we perceive the storms of passion calmed, and a serene hope in God, and a patient endurance of injuries tak-

ing possession of our souls. We know by an evidence which we cannot communicate to any but Christians, that Jesus is the Son of God, for we feel ourselves elevated and strengthened by his presence. . . .

“I hope I am not insensible to the obligations of virtue and piety and benevolence, however displayed, however enforced. But never do I feel how lovely is virtue, — never do I feel so deeply my own wretchedness, unworthiness, and guilt, — never do I so earnestly desire to subdue my evil passions, and to put on humility and universal love, as when I behold the glory of God in the face, in the actions, in the words, of Jesus Christ.”

1808. THE MAJESTIC CLAIMS OF JESUS. “Can we read this solemn declaration of Jesus without wonder and veneration? We now see him in a situation where everything tended to depress his mind. We see him surrounded by men who he well knew would ridicule his claims, and make them the foundation of his ruin. We see him in circumstances in which ambition and every earthly interest united to oppose the assertion of this high character. From his silence we see that at this trying moment he was perfectly composed, not agitated, not provoked, not hurried to imprudence by violence of passion, but capable of the calmest anticipation of the consequences of his acknowledgment. In this situation, when the solemnity of an oath was imposed on him, and when life or death rested on the words he uttered, we hear him breaking that silence which calumny could not interrupt, and in the most firm, serious, and majestic language claiming the honors of the Son of God, of the promised Messiah, of the Saviour of the world. We not only hear him assenting to the question, ‘Art thou the Christ?’ but adding to his assent a declaration of his glory, which he must have known would have been peculiarly offensive to the Jews, and applying to himself language which, under the old dispensation, had been limited to God, — thus expressing his intimate union with the Father. If we consider the solemnity of the occasion, and the language employed by Christ, we are authorized in saying, that, if Jesus did not declare the truth, he was not merely a common deceiver, but the very worst of deceivers. But how can this be reconciled with his whole life and doctrines? and how could a man of such a character have made such a profession in circumstances which threatened nothing but humiliation and suffering?

“If we view Jesus, bound as a criminal at a human tribunal, hemmed in with malignant enemies thirsty for his blood, how can we help astonishment at the serene, dignified, sublime language in



which he spoke? What marks of an elevated mind, conscious of majesty, unintimidated by the worst forms of danger, and assured of triumphs over all opposers! It cannot be said that this is the language of boasting. It was extorted from the silent sufferer by an oath. He who had heard without reply the accusations of malice, and discovered a mind free from every discordant feeling, at length lifted his eyes to his judges, and declared, 'Ye shall hereafter see me sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' "

1808. DIGNITY OF JESUS. "A few days before, he had entered this city in triumph, he had wrought miracles which extorted admiration, he had heard the shouts of a crowd welcoming him as the promised Son of David. Through this same city he now passed as a criminal in bonds, a silent sufferer, and experienced only contempt or indifference. He saw a fickle, worldly people converted into enemies, because he had refused to assume the outward glory which they expected in the Messiah. It is peculiarly hard to bear a sudden reverse of circumstances, to maintain benevolence towards men who, from selfish feelings, express attachment, and then forsake, injure, and conspire to destroy us. But Jesus wept over Jerusalem, when he foresaw its ingratitude; and even whilst its inhabitants thronged after him to extort a sentence of condemnation, he expressed no emotions of disappointment or anger, and bore, with equal tranquillity, the malignity of rulers and the versatility of the populace. He saw how little effect had been produced by his ministry. He saw his enemies prosecuting their designs without any of the opposition they had feared. No friends appeared to accompany and defend him. But he made no attempts to excite anew the hopes and attachment of the multitude. And he, who had so often addressed them for their own salvation, offered not one appeal to secure himself. . . .

"Pilate marvelled greatly. He had been accustomed to observe in prisoners a disposition to clear themselves from such aggravated charges. He saw how easily these accusations might be repelled; he was astonished at the composed, unbroken silence of the accused. This silence of Jesus expresses great dignity and conscious innocence. He knew that the occasion required no defence. A Roman governor, residing in the narrow province of Judea, needed not to be told that no insurrection had been stirred up within his jurisdiction. Pilate must have been too well acquainted with the affairs of Judea, to need that Jesus should declare that he had forbidden none to pay tribute to Cæsar. Pilate must have known



the Jewish people too well to believe that they would ever have accused a man who really aimed to break the Roman yoke from their necks. It was not necessary that he should speak in order to prevent misconception in his judge; and he was therefore silent. In this position of Jesus, in this declining to use any means with the governor or populace for his safety, we see the evidences of a mind submissive to God, superior to fear, undisturbed by passion, and persuaded that its sufferings were instrumental to some important end. This conduct of Christ, especially if we consider the friendly sentiments of Pilate, was inconsistent with all the views and motives which influence selfish men. . . .

“In these words we see the majesty and fearless composure of Jesus. ‘I cannot and will not deny that I am a king. It is my great office to declare the truth; it is by the influence of truth, that I am to reign in the hearts of men; and I cannot shrink from asserting this most important truth, that I have the power and authority of a sovereign at once to rule and to defend my people. Let not this doctrine offend. Every one who is of the truth, who loves the light, and whose mind is open to conviction, heareth and acknowledgeth this and all my doctrines.’ These words, spoken at so interesting and trying a period, discover to us the elevation of our Saviour in a very striking light. We see his mind unbroken by suffering. We see in him the firmest adherence to the doctrines he had formerly taught. We see in him a conscious dignity, a full conviction of the glory and power with which he was invested. He asserts his royal office, not from ostentation, not amidst a host of flatterers, but in the face of enemies; and when he made this solemn declaration, his appearance bore little conformity, indeed, to the splendor of earthly monarchs.”

1810. THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRISTIANITY A PROOF OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN. “I wish at this time to call your attention to the extent of the influence which Jesus ascribes to himself in the text, ‘I am the light of the world.’

“He here represents himself as sent to diffuse his lustre through all the regions of the earth, to introduce a religion for the whole human race, to improve the human character in every nation under heaven, to be a universal benefactor, to guide the steps of all men, however widely dispersed, to a better world. . . .

“From the whole tenor of the New Testament, we learn that Jesus Christ claimed to himself the high character of the guide, instructor, and Lord of the whole human family. He declared himself commissioned to diffuse most salutary doctrines through the

earth, to bring all nations to one faith, to introduce a new worship in the place of the various systems which divided mankind, to unite the discordant world under himself as a common head. . . .

“ Let me point out some of those features of the gospel which fit it for being a universal religion. The representations of God, given by Jesus Christ, are fitted to draw to him the hearts and hopes of all human beings. Under all other religions, the Divinity was represented as sustaining a peculiar relation to the particular nation for which the religion was designed. . . .

“ But Jesus represented him as the Father of all, as having no regard to outward distinctions, as the God of Jew and Gentile, as looking with a father's compassion on those nations who had wandered from him, and as extending his arms to receive them. In the gospel, the *paternal* character of God is continually brought to view. ‘ Our Father,’ is the language in which we are to address him; and all men are invited to approach in the character of children. This is at once a very tender and a very noble sentiment. We, indeed, are so accustomed to it, that we see nothing singular in that religion which enforces it. But we should go back to the age of Christ. We should remember the blindness of the idolater, and the narrow feelings of the Jew; and then we shall be struck with the elevated and enlarged mind of Jesus Christ, who so clearly taught that God is no respecter of persons, that he is the God and Father of all men, and that before his throne all nations may bow and find equal acceptance. . . .

“ Again, another feature of the gospel which renders it fit to be a universal religion is this. The worship it prescribes is remarkably free from forms, rules, ceremonies, and thus it is adapted to all climates, all modes of life, all states of society, and other circumstances under which men are placed. . . .

“ It is very remarkable, that when he was brought up and living amidst the pomp, and show, and forms, and bigotry of the Jews, he should yet teach a religion in which the whole stress is laid upon sentiments, dispositions, and principles, which give to forms all their value; in which the worship of God in spirit and in truth is declared to be the only acceptable worship, and in which nothing of the outward religion and burdensome ritual of his time is to be found; in which are enjoined only two positive institutions, so simple and so expressive that they may be observed by all men of all nations with equal ease and with constant improvement. Does not this purity, this simplicity, this spirituality of the gospel, substantiate the claim of Jesus, that he came indeed from God, to be the light of all mankind? . . .

“Let me conclude this branch of the subject with directing you to another feature of the gospel which fits it to be a universal religion. It is a plain, perspicuous religion, and suited to the comprehension and wants of all classes of society. A universal religion ought to have, if I may so speak, the clearness, brightness, of the sun, and to diffuse its beams of truth and consolation on high and low, rich and poor, — on all the varieties of the social state. This is eminently the character of the gospel, and distinguishes it from all other religions. Jesus Christ, whilst he claimed the highest title, yet descended in a sense to the level of the humblest of mankind. He dispensed his religion in familiar language, in striking and easy comparisons, in affecting narratives, and in brief and comprehensive precepts. He did not, like the ancient teachers, affect a distance from the multitude, and reserve his mysteries, incomprehensible by vulgar minds, for select disciples. He addressed all men with one voice, with the same doctrines, promises, and admonition; and, what is remarkable, whilst he instructed the ignorant, he yet presented to the refined and intelligent more sublime and interesting truths than they had ever conceived before. He was simple and familiar, but in reading his discourses we discover a majesty in his simplicity, an authority mingled with his condescension. He taught as one who came to instruct the race, for he spoke on subjects which come home to every man’s breast. He did not adapt himself to the circumstances of any particular age, or nation, or rank. He spoke of that God on whom all men depend, of that obedience and love which all men owe, of those sorrows which pierce every heart, of that sin which burdens every conscience, of that death which terminates every mere earthly prospect, and of that futurity to which the eyes of all nations have ever turned with inquiring anxiety. This is the excellence of the gospel, that it is fitted for the many, for the mass of mankind, in every age and every nation. It does not treat of local or temporary interests. It warns of danger to which all are exposed, enjoins virtues which all may practise, and offers consolation which all at some seasons need. Its spirit, which is universal love and benevolence, is fitted for all climes, for all classes. It makes the true dignity of man in every condition; it forms the happiness of families and communities; and it is the best preparation for happiness in heaven. Surely a religion so suited to the whole human race is worthy the universal Father. And when we consider the circumstances of him who proclaimed it, and the darkness, narrowness, and corruption of the age in which he lived, have we not conclusive proof that he came from God, that the end for which he was sent



will be accomplished, that he will yet be the light of the world, in the most extensive sense of the words, and that his truth, designed for all nations, will finally be extended to all the regions of the earth?

“Before this sun of righteousness, the mists of error, superstition, idolatry, will melt away; all nations, receiving one pure faith, will be reduced to peace. The predicted time, when the lion and lamb shall lie down together, will come; from an enlightened and a united world one offering will ascend to the common Father and Redeemer. These are prospects which almost overpower belief by their vastness and their happiness. But God has sent his Son to be the light of the world; and causes are in operation sufficiently powerful to produce these desired effects. The diffusion of Christianity through so many nations, amidst so many difficulties in the past, is a pledge of its future progress. This religion is now the religion of the civilized world, of the most improved nations, of nations who are extending themselves through the earth, and who, according to all human probability, must acquire a decided influence over all other countries. Here, then, is a rock and foundation of hope to the good man amidst the fluctuations of the world. The cause of truth, holiness, and human improvement is the cause of God himself.”

1811. CHRIST'S RELATIONS TO THE RACE. “The exalted state of our Saviour is a subject on which the Scriptures often dwell, although it is necessarily attended with a degree of obscurity. The manner in which he now exists can very faintly be conceived by us. Our experience is limited to this world. Jesus is the inhabitant of heaven; he has entered on an immortal life, and is clothed with power, such as is unknown amongst men,—a power felt through heaven and earth,—a power which is one day to be displayed in the most wonderful effects. . . .

“That God has invested his Son with authority over the whole human race, to accomplish the most benevolent ends, is not to be wondered at as something unprecedented, and unlike everything we see in the course of providence. This relation of Jesus Christ to the human race is not altogether without example. On the contrary, it is God's common method to connect one being with others, for the sake of imparting to them the blessings we need. All the good which we have received has flowed to us, not immediately from the Father, but from other beings, who have received power, authority, wisdom, and love from God, that they might be sources of good to us and all around us. . . .



“It may be objected to the views which have now been given as to the power to which Christ is exalted for human salvation, that we do not see such sensible effects as might be expected from this universal sovereign. To this I answer, that a being so far exalted above us must have innumerable modes of operation which we cannot discern or comprehend. His agency may continually be mingled with human events, and yet we not discern it. No being acts, if I may use the words, with so much silence and secrecy as the Infinite Father. He is ever present, and ever operating, and yet we see him not, we hear him not; and his Son Jesus Christ, who is the image of his power as well as of all his perfections, may act in the same unseen, yet efficacious manner. The narrowness of our vision is sufficient to account for our not distinguishing more sensibly the operation of Jesus Christ in human affairs. . . .

“The agency of Christ is at present silent and concealed; but the time is approaching, when the veil which conceals our Lord will be removed, when he will be revealed, with the angels who now obey him, in the glory of the Father, when his power will be felt through the regions of the dead, when all who have lived will receive new life at his hands, and when all will surround his judgment-seat. Then will be seen, and felt, and acknowledged by all, the exalted authority of Jesus Christ. . . .

“At that day men will be as angels, and will be associated in a measure with angels; and then will be understood that striking language of Paul, that it is the purpose of God to ‘gather together in one all things in Christ.’”

1811. CHRIST’S RELATIONS TO THE CHURCH. “By his Church our Saviour does not mean a party, bearing the name of a human leader, distinguished by a form or an opinion, and, on the ground of this distinction, denying the name or character of Christians to all but themselves. He means by it the body of his friends and followers, *who truly imbibe his spirit*, no matter by what name they are called, in what house they worship, by what peculiarities of mode and opinion they are distinguished, under what sky they live, or what language they speak. These are the true church, — men made better, made holy, virtuous, by his religion, — men who, hoping in his promises, keep his commands.

“Ever since Christ’s church was established such a unity has existed, such characters have been formed by the gospel; and this influence it will exert through all ages. As we have said, we have reason to suppose, from what has been experienced, that great changes will take place in the present state of Christianity; and the

time is, perhaps, coming, when all our present sects will live only in history. But the influences of the gospel will not therefore cease; the church will not die with the sects into which it is broken. On the contrary, we may hope that the vine of God will flourish more, when these branches are lopped off which exhaust its strength and bear little fruit. Men will then learn that Christianity is designed for practice, and not for contention; ceasing to censure others, they will aim to reform themselves. The simple gospel, divested of human addition, no longer disfigured by absurd explanation, will be the centre and bond of union to the world. The name of *Christian* will absorb all other names; and the spirit of love to God and man will take the place of unhallowed zeal and bitter contention. Human churches, human establishments, — the effects and monuments of folly and ambition, — will fall. But the church of Christ — which is another name for piety, goodness, righteousness, peace, and love — shall endure forever. . . .

“The recovery of men to holiness, by the diffusion of a holy doctrine, was not one of the inferior objects of Christ’s mission, not an accidental end, which may fail, and yet his great purpose be accomplished. This was the central work which brought him into the world. Forsaking all other ends, he lived for this, — to unfold, and confirm, and enforce a religion which should fill the whole earth, and subsist to the end of time. . . .

“It is a delightful and elevating thought, that the Son of God, of whom the Scriptures speak in such magnificent language, has this peculiar interest in the sanctification and recovery of our race; that, after living to teach, and dying to confirm, his truth, he is now clothed with majesty and might, to extend it through the earth. Can that cause fail which has this advocate in heaven; that kingdom be overthrown which this immortal and benignant Sovereign watches with a constant care? We must never imagine Jesus Christ withdrawn from the support of his church, or indifferent to the holiness and virtue of our race.”

## SECTION FOURTH.

### SOCIETY.

1810. PROVIDENCE MANIFESTED IN THE PROGRESS OF SOCIETY.  
“We must not suffer the miseries which history brings to view to fill our minds, and to crowd from them the animating conviction of an overruling Providence, which will make light spring up in darkness, and the furious waves subside into peace. We ought to re-

member, that, whilst society has been so agitated, innumerable individuals have, in all ages, enjoyed peace and security; that, in the family retreat where history never penetrates, the domestic virtues have been cherished, and all the endearments and improvements of social intercourse enjoyed. We ought to remember, that, amidst the convulsions of the world, the cause of truth and religion has ever maintained its ground, and been silently extending its influence; that the race has been progressive; that the light of revelation, which at first faintly gleamed in an obscure corner of the world, is now beaming on many nations; and that treasures of knowledge and wisdom have constantly been accumulating as they have been transmitted from age to age. Let us not, then, waver in the belief, which there is so much to confirm, that there is a wise and almighty Providence extended over all the changes of society.

“As the individuals of the human race pass through stages of helplessness, inexperience, and suffering, before they attain the vigor of their powers, so the race itself is destined to pass through its infancy and growth, before it attains to wisdom and happiness. As the individual improves by experience, and gains the best lessons from suffering, so, perhaps, society is to be instructed and ameliorated by calamity. Future ages may look back on the present, and, whilst they shudder at the scenes of confusion and bloodshed which are now exhibited, may be kept from that depravity of manners, that selfish, mercenary spirit, that neglect of Christianity and of education, that pride and ambition, which are the sources of our miseries. But, whatever be the methods of Providence, we may be assured that the interests of virtue and religion will triumph, and with these all the interests of society will be advanced. Nothing is wanting except the extension of pure principle and pure manners, to make society happy; and without this, all other improvements will be of no avail. But this *will be* effected. . . .

“The time is coming when the wicked will be remembered only to instruct and improve, and the miseries of men be remembered only to illustrate the triumphs of goodness and happiness. Let us, then, never faint; but in the darkest period cleave to the cause of righteousness, seek to bless and reform mankind, and exult in the thought that our labors shall not be in vain in the Lord Jesus.”

1809. PEACE ON EARTH. “Peace is a state of harmony between beings who have one interest, are alive to the same pleasures and pains, and participate in each other’s views and feelings. Our



Saviour, in his last prayer for his disciples, has taught us what he meant by the peace which he came to establish on earth, when he expresses again and again this desire, that they might 'be *one*, even as he and the Father were one.'

"By this peace we are not to understand merely that state of things in which men abstain from mutual injury. It is that mutual affection which prompts us to every sacrifice for one another's good, and renders each happy to do and to suffer for his friend. Peace is sometimes spoken of as a negative, inactive state. But in the gospel it expresses something very different,—the union of good hearts, which are inflamed with the best sentiments, which are attracted by congeniality, and which conspire to act for the common welfare. This peace is not the profession of lips, but living concord.

"The end for which Jesus Christ came was to convert men into real friends, to make them objects of each other's attachment, to give them a common feeling and a common interest. He came to operate on the spirit, to produce inward effects, to implant a principle of true love, to fit men for the most endearing relations. He came to adorn the human character, to strip it of everything fierce and repulsive, to make it attractive, to shed round it the mild lustre of benevolence. He came to take from men's hands the implements of war, and to open their arms to embrace one another. He came to dispel distrust, suspicion, and jealousy, to render man worthy of the confidence of his brother, to bring men to that exalted state in which they will lay bare their whole souls without fear. He came to draw men off from separate interests, and to win them to objects in which all may combine, to which all may lend their aid, and which will thus form the means of affectionate intercourse. He came to soften insensibility, to make many hearts beat in unison, to excite the tenderest concern for each individual's welfare, and the most generous, disinterested labors for the common good. He came to root out envy, to give every person an interest in the excellence of others, to make us look with delight on all promises of goodness, to rouse us to be helpers of each other's purity and perfection, to teach us to feel that the progress of our brethren is our own. He came to form such a union amongst men as would lead them to pour freely from their hearts the noblest views and feelings, and thus become the means of enkindling every grace and virtue, and mutual sources of love and wisdom. He came, in a word, so to bind us together that we should count nothing material or spiritual our own, but hold all things in common, and give all to the general well-being."



1810 (*April 5, Day of Public Fast*). THE MILITARY DESPOTISM OF FRANCE. "Am I asked, what there is so peculiar in our times? I answer: In the very heart of Europe, in the centre of the civilized world, a new power has suddenly arisen on the ruins of old institutions, peculiar in its character, and most ruinous in its influence. We there see a nation, which, from its situation, its fertility, and population, has always held a commanding rank in Europe, suddenly casting off the form of government, the laws, the habits, the spirit, by which it was assimilated to surrounding nations, and by which it gave to them the power of restraining it; and all at once assuming a new form, and erecting a new government, free in name and profession, but holding at its absolute disposal the property and life of every subject, and directing all its energies to the subjugation of foreign countries. We see the supreme power of this nation passing in rapid succession from one hand to another. But its object never changes. We see it dividing and corrupting by its arts, and then overwhelming by its arms, the nations which surround it. We see one end steadily kept in view, — the creation of an irresistible military power. For this end, we see every man, in the prime of life, subjected to military service. We see military talent everywhere excited, and by every means rewarded. The arts of life, agriculture, commerce, all are of secondary value. In short, we see a mighty nation sacrificing every blessing in the prosecution of an unprincipled attempt at universal conquest.

"The result you well know. The surrounding nations, unprepared for this new conflict, and absolutely incapacitated by their old habits and institutions to meet this new power on equal terms, have fallen in melancholy succession; and each, as it has fallen, has swelled by its plunder the power and rapacity of its conquerors. We now behold this nation triumphant over Continental Europe. Its armies are immensely numerous; yet the number is not the circumstance which renders them most formidable. These armies have been trained to conquest by the most perfect discipline. At their head are generals who have risen only by military merit. They are habituated to victory, and their enemies are habituated to defeat.

"All this immense power is now centred in one hand, wielded by one mind, — a mind formed in scenes of revolution and blood, — a mind most vigorous and capacious, but whose capacity is filled with plans of dominion and devastation. It has not room for one thought of mercy. The personal character of Napoleon is of itself sufficient to inspire the gloomiest forebodings. But in addition to his lust for power, he is almost impelled by the necessity of his circumstances to carry on the bloody work of conquest. His

immense armies, the only foundations of his empire, must be supported. Impoverished France, however, cannot give them support. They must therefore live on the spoils of other nations. But the nations which they successively spoil, and whose industry and arts they extinguish, cannot long sustain them. Hence they must pour themselves into new regions. Hence plunder, devastation, and new conquests are not merely the outrages of wanton barbarity; they are essential even to the existence of this tremendous power.

“What overwhelming, disheartening prospects are these! In the midst of Christendom, this most sanguinary power has reared its head, and holds the world in defiance; and now, let me ask, how are we impressed in these dark, disastrous times? Here is every form of misery. We are called to sympathize with fallen greatness, with descendants of ancient sovereigns, hurled from their thrones, and cast out to contempt; and if these do not move us, our sympathy is demanded by a wretched peasantry, driven from their humble roofs, and abandoned to hunger and unsheltered poverty. The decaying city, the desolated country, the weeping widow, the forsaken orphan, call on us for our tears. Nations, broken in spirit, yet forced to smother their sorrows, call on us, with a silent eloquence, to feel for their wrongs; and how are we moved by these scenes of ruin, horror, and alarm? Does there not, my friends, prevail among us a cold indifference, as if all this were nothing to us, as if no tie of brotherhood bound us to these sufferers? Are we not prone to follow the authors of this ruin with an admiration of their power and success, which almost represses our abhorrence of their unsparing cruelty?

“But we are not merely insensible to the calamities of other nations. There is a still stranger insensibility to our own dangers. We seem determined to believe that this storm will spend all its force at a distance. The idea, that *we* are marked out as victims of this all-destroying despotism, *that our turn is to come and perhaps is near*,—this idea strikes on most minds as a fiction. Our own deep interest in the present conflict is unfelt even by some who feel as they ought for other nations. . . .

“It may be asked, whether I intend by these remarks to represent our country as in a hopeless state. No, my friends. I have held up the *danger* of our country in all its magnitude, only that I may in my humble measure excite that spirit which is necessary, and which by the blessing of Providence may be effectual, to avert it. Alarming as our condition is, there does appear to me to be one method of safety, and only one:—*As a people, we must be*

brought to see and to feel our danger ; we must be excited to a public spirit, an energy, a magnanimity, proportioned to the solemnity of the times in which we are called to act. If I may be permitted, I would say to the upright, the disinterested, the enlightened friends of their country, that the times demand new and peculiar exertions. In the present state of the world, there is, under God, but one hope of a people ; and that is, their own exalted virtue. This, therefore, should be your object and labor, — to fix the understandings of the people on the calamities that are approaching them ; to enlighten the public mind ; to improve our moral feelings ; to breathe around you an elevated spirit ; to fortify as many hearts as possible with the generous purpose to do all which men can do for the preservation of their country. You should labor, not to excite a temporary paroxysm, for the danger is not to be repelled by a few impassioned efforts. We want a calm and solemn apprehension fixed in every mind, that we have everything at stake, — that great sacrifices are to be expected, but that the evils are so tremendous as to justify and require every sacrifice. We want to have a general impression made of the character, spirit, designs, power, and acts of France ; — of the unparalleled wretchedness, the political, moral, and religious debasement, attendant on union with her, or on subjection to her power. To effect this end, I have said that new exertions should be made. The common vehicles of political information have done, and may do, much, but cannot do all which is required. Authentic publications *in the names* of our wisest, purest, most venerated citizens should be spread abroad, containing the plain, unexaggerated, uncolored history of the revolution and domination of France.

“ It may be said that the people have all the evidence on this subject already communicated to them. I fear that many have not received sufficiently distinct and connected information from sources on which they rely ; and I am confident that many who know the truth need to have the convictions of their understandings converted into active principles, into convictions of the heart. I fear there are many who are blinded to the true character of the conqueror of Europe, by the splendor of his victories ; many who attach to him the noble qualities which have been displayed by other heroes, and who repose a secret hope in his *clemency*. They ought to know, and they might know, that he has risen to power in a revolution which has had a peculiar influence in hardening the heart ; that his character is unilluminated by one ray of beneficence ; that he is dark, vindictive, unrelenting ; that no man loves him, that he cares for no man’s love ; that he asks only to be feared,



and that fear and horror are the only sentiments he ought to inspire. . . .

“On these topics, and on many others which would illustrate the character and tendency of the French domination, might not conviction be carried to some minds at least, and might not many sluggish minds be awakened, if persevering, steady efforts were made by men whose characters would be pledges of their veracity and disinterestedness? Sudden effects might not be produced, and perhaps sudden effects are not to be desired. We do not want a temporary, evanescent ardor, excited for partial purposes and local objects. We want a rational conviction of their great danger fastened on the people, and a steady and generous purpose to resist it by every means which Providence has put within their power. Let me entreat all who are interested in this great object, the improvement and elevation of public sentiment, to adhere to such means only as are worthy that great end; to suppress and condemn appeals to unworthy passions, misrepresentation, and that abuse which depraves public taste and sentiment, and makes a man of a pure mind ashamed of the cause which he feels himself bound to support. Let me also urge you to check the feelings and the expressions of malignity and revenge. Curses, denunciations, and angry invectives are not the language of that spirit to which I look for the safety of our country. We ought to know that the *malignant passions* of a people are among the powerful instruments by which the enemy binds them to his yoke. The patriotism which we need is a benevolent, generous, forbearing spirit; too much engrossed with the public welfare to be stung by personal opposition; calm and patient in exhibiting the truth, and tolerant towards those who cannot, or who will not, receive it. Let me repeat it; the end we should propose, the elevation of public sentiment and feeling, is not to be secured by violence or passion, but by *truth* from the hearts and lips and pens of men whose lives and characters give it energy.

“But as the most effectual method of exalting the views, purposes, and character of our nation, let me entreat you who are lovers of your country to labor with all your power to *diffuse the faith and practice of the gospel of Christ*. The prevalence of true Christianity is the best defence of a nation, especially at this solemn and eventful period. It will secure to us the blessing of Almighty God; and it will operate more powerfully than any other cause in making us recoil from the embrace of France. No greater repugnance can be conceived than what subsists between the mild, humane, peaceful, righteous, and devout spirit of the gospel, and



the impious, aspiring, and rapacious spirit of this new nation. Christianity will, indeed, exclude from our breasts all feelings of ill-will, malice, and revenge towards France and her sovereign; for these are feelings which it never tolerates. But it will inspire a holy abhorrence of her spirit and designs, and will make us shudder at the thought of sinking under her power, or aiding her success.

“But it becomes us to promote Christianity, not only because it will *help to save* our country. We should cherish and diffuse it, because it will be a refuge and consolation, *even should our country fall*; a support which the oppressor cannot take from us. The sincere Christian is not comfortless, even in the darkest and most degenerate times. He knows that oppressive power is but for a moment; and his benevolence is animated by the promise of God, that, even in this world, this scene of cruelty and wretchedness, there will yet be enjoyed the reign of peace, of truth, and holiness under the benignant Saviour.”

EXTRACTS FROM A SERMON PREACHED IN BOSTON, JULY 23, 1812, THE DAY OF THE PUBLIC FAST APPOINTED BY THE EXECUTIVE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST GREAT BRITAIN. “That we have received no injuries from the nation we have selected as our enemy I do not say; but when I consider the conduct of our own government in relation to the two belligerents, — the partiality and timid submission they have expressed towards the one, the cause of suspicion they have given to the other, — and the spirit in which they have sought reparation from England, I am unable to justify the war in which we have engaged. To render the war justifiable, it is not enough that we have received injuries; — we must ask ourselves, Have *we* done our duty to the nation of which we complain? have we taken and kept a strictly impartial position towards her and her enemy? have we not submitted to outrages from her enemy by which he has acquired advantages in the war? have we sought reparation of injuries in a truly pacific spirit? have we insisted only on undoubted rights? have we demanded no unreasonable concessions? These questions must be answered before we decide on the character of the war, and I fear the answer must be against us. . . . If we have rushed into it when we might have avoided it by an impartial and pacific course, then we have wantonly and by our own fault drawn on ourselves its privations and calamities. Our enemy may, indeed, divide the guilt with us; but on ourselves, as truly as on our enemy, falls the heavy guilt of spreading tumult, slaughter, and misery through the family of God.

“If on the ground of right and justice this war cannot be defended, what shall we say when we come to consider its expediency, its effects on ourselves and the world? It is a war fraught with ruin to our property, our morals, our religion, our independence, our dearest rights, — whilst its influence on other nations, on the common cause of humanity, is most unhappy. . . .

“This war is a death-blow to our commerce. The ocean, which nature has spread before us as the field of our enterprise and activity, and from which we have reaped the harvest of our prosperity, is, in effect, forbidden us. Our ships and superfluous produce are to perish on our hands, — our capital to waste away in unproductive inactivity, — our intercourse with all foreign nations is broken off, and the nation with which we sustained the most profitable intercourse is our foe. Need I tell you the distress which this war must spread through the commercial classes of society, and among all whose occupations are connected with commerce? How many are there from whom the hard earnings of years are to be wrested by this war, whose active pursuits and cheering prospects of future comfort are exchanged for discouragement, solicitude, and approaching want!

“In addition to this, as our resources are decreasing, the public burdens are growing heavier; and government, after paralyzing our industry and closing the channels of our wealth, are about to call on us for new contributions to support the war under which we are sinking. And, to fill up the measure of injury, we are told that this war, so fatal to commerce, so dreaded by the friends of commerce, is carried on for its protection. We are required to believe, that restriction and war, the measures which have drained away the life-blood of our prosperity, are designed to secure our rights on the ocean.

“But loss of property is a small evil attending this war, — its effect on our *character* cannot be calculated. I need not tell you the moral influence of a war which is bringing to a gloomy pause the activity of the community, — which is to fill our streets with laborers destitute of employment, — which is to reduce our young men to idleness, — which will compel a large portion of the community to esteem their own government their worst enemy. Regular industry is the parent of sobriety, and gives strength to all the virtues. A community must be corrupted in proportion as idleness, discontent, and want prevail. We have reason to fear that these temptations will prove too strong for the virtue of common minds, — that, with the decline of commerce, the sense of honor and uprightness in pecuniary transactions will decline, — that fair dealing will

be succeeded by fraud, — that civil laws will be treated with contempt, — that habits of dissoluteness and intemperance, already too common, will be awfully multiplied, — that our young men, thrown out of employment and having no field for their restless activity and ardent hopes, will give themselves up to lawless pleasure or immoral pursuits.

“ Let me here mention one pursuit which this war will encourage, and which will operate very unhappily on our character. I have said that the ocean will be abandoned. I mistake ; — the merchant-vessel will indeed forsake it, but the privateer will take her place. The ocean is no longer to be the field of useful and honest enterprise. We are no longer to traverse it, that we may scatter through the world the bounties of Providence. Henceforth plunder, — plunder is our only object. We are to issue from our ports, not to meet the armed ship of our enemy, — not to break her naval power, — not to wage a war for public purposes ; but we shall go forth to meet the defenceless private merchant, and, with our sword at his breast, we are to demand his property, and to enrich ourselves with his spoils. This pursuit is, indeed, allowed by the law of nations ; but Christians, and the friends to public morals, must dread and abhor it, as peculiarly calculated to stamp on a people the character of rapacity and hardness of heart. Yet this is the pursuit, this the character, in which Americans are henceforth to be found on the ocean.

“ But all the ruinous effects of this war are not yet unfolded. To see it in its true character, we must consider *against what nation it is waged*, and *with what nation it is connecting us*. We have selected for our enemy the nation from which we sprang, and which has long afforded and still offers us a friendly and profitable intercourse, — a nation which has been for ages the stronghold of Protestant Christianity, — which everywhere exhibits temples of religion, institutions of benevolence, nurseries of science, the aids and means of human improvement, — a nation which, with all the corruptions of her government, still enjoys many of the best blessings of civil liberty, and which is now contending for her own independence, and for the independence of other nations, against the oppressor of mankind. When I view my country taking part with the oppressor against that nation which has alone arrested his proud career of victory, — which is now spreading her shield over desolated Portugal and Spain, — which is the chief hope of the civilized world, — I blush, — I mourn. We are linking ourselves with the acknowledged enemy of mankind, — with a government . . . which has left not a vestige of liberty where it has extended its



blasting sway, — which is at this moment ravaging nations that are chargeable with no crime but hatred of a foreign yoke. Into contact and communion with this bloody nation we are brought by this war, — and what can we gain by building up its power? On this subject too much plainness cannot be used. Let our government know that we deem alliance with France the worst of evils, threatening at once our morals, our liberty, and our religion.”<sup>1</sup>

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### CHAPTER III. — THE UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY.

EVENTS were now about to summon Mr. Channing from the quiet scenes in which he was earnestly seeking a religious life, to take an active though unwilling part in the Unitarian controversy; and any one who wishes to understand aright his relations to this movement should cast a glance backward, and note the progress of the different influences which then met to intermingle in unpleasant but inevitable conflict. If with a catholic and not sectarian temper we survey the ecclesiastical history of New England, we cannot fail to see, that in this commotion of the spiritual world, as in those which disturbed the atmosphere, the elements were but seeking equilibrium, and that modes of thought and feeling which at first seem to run most counter to each other were really different cloud-currents of one storm. Certainly the candid of all parties must admit, that, by means of this agitation, the heaven of piety has become more clear, the air of thought more fresh, the earth of charity more green.

From the middle of the last century onwards, three distinct tendencies may be traced in the minds of the Christians of this country, and, indeed, of Europe also. The first is Spiritual Piety, devoutly longing for a near communion with the Infinite Being and the heavenly world, manifesting itself in various forms of enthusiasm, and desiring universal sanctification. The second is Philanthropy, demanding a thorough application of the law of love to all the actual relations and practical concerns of life, and animating men to an unprecedented zeal in moral and social reforms.

<sup>1</sup> The reader who wishes to learn more fully Mr. Channing's views at this eventful period, is referred to the remarks on the “Duties of the Citizen in Times of Trial and Danger.” Works, Vol. V. pp. 411-421. One Volume Edition, pp. 679-684.



The third is Free Inquiry, seeking a harmony between religion, philosophy, and experience, — between revelation, reason, and common-sense, — and aiming to give such a view of man's destiny upon earth as shall do justice to nature, to history, and to Divine Order. With what was good in each of these tendencies Mr. Channing sympathized and co-operated, while from the extravagances of each he sought to guard himself and others; and the sincere student of his writings cannot but observe with admiration the calm consistency with which he twined his threefold cord of existence. He was from original impulse, by method, and in action, complex and not simple, always reconciling differences by a living synthesis, averse to every kind of partisanship, and each year becoming more liberal, various, expansive, well-balanced. The appropriate motto of his life is HOLINESS, TRUTH, HUMANITY.

Extracts from letters, manuscripts, and publications, at this period, will sufficiently indicate Mr. Channing's position. They are suitably introduced by one in which, at the very close of his career, he has himself reviewed the way whereby Providence had led him up to peace.

“ February, 1840.

“ I read your communication with much sympathy. Indeed, it carried me back to the earlier stages of my own religious history. Not that I have ever suffered as you have done; but no person can think on the subject of religion without encountering difficulties. Most people owe their freedom from doubts to the absence of thought. As soon as we begin to reflect, we are compelled to call in question a part of our traditional faith; and the shaking of a part sometimes makes us tremble for the whole. I have spent years of earnest, anxious search for the truth; nor do I repent of my toil. All my toil and solicitude vanish, when I think of the calm faith, the enlargement of views and hopes, in which they have issued.

“ You wish to know the history of my mind, but it would fill a volume. My inquiries grew out of the shock given to my moral nature by the popular system of faith which I found prevailing round me in my early years. All my convictions of justice and goodness revolted against the merciless dogmas then commonly taught. I went to the Scriptures, and the blessed light gradually beamed on me from the word of God. I soon learned the great end for which Christ came into the world, — that his first, highest purpose was, not to deliver us from punishment, but from that which deserves punishment, from moral evil, from every impurity of heart and life, from whatever separates us from God; that he came to exert

a moral, spiritual influence, by which man was to become a pure, disinterested, excellent being. I soon learned that heaven and hell belong to the mind, that 'the fire and the worm' have their seat in the soul, and that we can attain to the happiness, only by drinking into the spirit, of heaven. In other words, I learned that 'the kingdom of heaven is within us,' — that Christianity is eminently a spiritual system, or intended chiefly to redeem the mind from evil, — that we understand its records only when we interpret them according to this principle. One great truth came out to my apprehension more and more strongly. I felt, I saw, that God is most willing to impart his 'Holy Spirit,' his strength and light, to every man who labors in earnest to overcome evil, to press forward to that perfection which is the only heaven. You will easily see how these views scattered all the darkness into which I had been plunged by a false, traditionary faith. . . .

"I beg you to feel that I sympathize with you in your trials. I can say for your encouragement, that the noblest human beings have sometimes passed through similar ones, and have emerged into the light of a calm and happy faith. Be not anxious to make up your mind in a moment. Be assured that God, the good, the just, cannot demand of you assent to what shocks your best feelings. Inquire as you have opportunity. Seek light from above. Especially be faithful to your convictions of duty, and live up to the light you already have, and I am confident that your difficulties, as far as they are mental, will give way."

TO THE HON. WILLIAM ELLERY.

"BOSTON, March, 1806.

"DEAR AND HONORED SIR, — . . . You will see from this that our standard of divinity does not entirely correspond with yours. It is clear that we cannot all be right. The great question, then, offers itself, 'Whether any deviate so far from truth as to be disqualified for receiving the blessings of the gospel, or whether any of the errors of the day necessarily imply a temper opposed to the spirit of the gospel.'

"It seems to be universally granted, that the state of the heart and affections is the great point by which a Christian is to be judged; and that sentiments are no farther important, than as they involve, imply, and cherish a state of heart. Now, can we say of the common errors which prevail in the Christian world, that they cannot coexist with a penitent, a pious, a benevolent spirit? Unless we can prove a clear repugnance between certain sentiments and the spirit of the gospel, — such a repugnance as forces us to conclude

that he who holds these sentiments cannot possess this spirit, — are we authorized to declare the sentiments damnable? An essential doctrine seems to be one which is necessary to the existence of Christian love, and is necessarily implied in this temper. I cannot, therefore, charge a man with damnable heresy, unless I see that his sentiments prove an opposite temper, or, at least, exclude the exercises of Christian love. If this be just, are we not called to be cautious in judging of the character, while we freely criticise the opinions, of others? May we not love the heart, when we think poorly of the head, of our neighbor?"

TO THE HON. WILLIAM ELLERY.

"BOSTON, May, 1806.

"DEAR AND HONORED SIR, — I thank you for your letter, and for the comment which it contains upon our divinity. You complain that our standard is not *particular* enough. But this is the distinguishing feature of our system of liberality. The greater the variety of sentiments with which a system will harmonize, or the fewer its fundamentals, the more worthy it is of liberal minds.

"I conceive these to be the leading principles of modern divinity : 'Practical righteousness is all in all, and every system which embraces motives enough to a good practice is sufficiently correct. *Love* is the fulfilling of the law and of the gospel. All truth is designed to excite this temper, and to form the habits which flow from it, and this is the only test which we fallible mortals can apply to doctrines. We have reason to think there are *good* men in every denomination. Every sect, therefore, embraces sufficient truth for the great end of Christ, the attainment of everlasting life. It does not follow from this, that all systems are equally valuable ; for some may tend more to purify the heart than others. But we cannot be certain that any system is wholly inadequate to this all-important end, and we must, therefore, condemn no man, unless his practice be corrupt.'

"The general sentiment which runs through this system, 'that the *temper of the heart* is the one thing needful in order to acceptance with God,' appears to me scriptural. All sects acknowledge that mere speculative assent is of no avail, that it is the *cordial* acceptance of the truth which makes the Christian. If, then, the same state of heart can exist in those who embrace different systems, I should pronounce them equally acceptable to God. This appears to me to be the great question, — 'Whether the different systems embraced by professing Christians imply different tempers,



principles of action, ends, and affections in those who embrace them; or, in other words, whether any of these systems, from their very nature, prove the absence of the Christian spirit in those by whom they are supported.'

"We find in the Scriptures denunciations against those who do not believe in Christ; but the reason seems to be, that they who reject Christ prove and express, by this rejection a corruption of heart. 'Ye are not *of God*, therefore ye hear me not.' In the same way we must make it to appear that the reception of a system can flow only from a corrupt heart, before we exclude those who hold it from Divine favor. It is not so much the reception of one system, or the rejection of another, as the temper of heart implied in this reception or rejection, which affects a man's acceptance with God. If this be true, it seems, that, to judge of the importance of doctrines, we must first form clear conceptions of the peculiar, characteristic, distinguishing spirit and temper which the gospel requires; and doctrines are to be estimated in proportion as they are necessary to this temper, are implied in it, or flow from it."

"BOSTON, December 29, 1812.

"I have spent this evening with our dear —, and she put into my hands your letter on the subject of religion, to which you referred in the last which I received from you. I read it with sorrow. I saw that your mind was yielding to impressions which I trusted you would repel with instinctive horror. I know that Calvinism is embraced by many excellent people, but I know that on some minds it has the most mournful effects, that it spreads over them an impenetrable gloom, that it generates a spirit of bondage and fear, that it chills the best affections, that it represses virtuous effort, that it sometimes shakes the throne of reason. On susceptible minds the influence of the system is always to be dreaded. If it be believed, I think there is ground for a despondence bordering on insanity. If I, and my beloved friends, and my whole race, have come from the hands of our Creator wholly depraved, irresistibly propense to all evil and averse to all good, — if only a portion are chosen to escape from this miserable state, and if the rest are to be consigned by the Being who gave us our depraved and wretched nature to endless torments in inextinguishable flames, — then I do think that nothing remains but to mourn in anguish of heart; then existence is a curse, and the Creator is —"

"O my merciful Father! I cannot speak of thee in the language which this system would suggest. No! thou hast been too kind to me to deserve this reproach from my lips. Thou hast created me .



to be happy ; thou callest me to virtue and piety, because in these consists my felicity ; and thou wilt demand nothing from me but what thou givest me ability to perform.

“ I see with sorrow that you are beginning to depart from the simple and affecting truths which you once cherished. You have become the advocate of an ‘ inborn corruption ’ which incapacitates for duty, and yet you think man to be responsible. You even seem to be leaning to the melancholy doctrine, that he may be abandoned to endless misery for not experiencing a change of heart, over which he has little or no control, and which depends entirely on the will of another being. Perhaps I have mistaken your sentiments. Your letter is written in an obscure, mystical style, very different from what distinguishes your ordinary compositions. Your conceptions seem to me loose, unsettled, undefined ; but, as far as they have form or substance, they are melancholy and forbidding. I am also deeply grieved to find you talking about persons, who call themselves Christians, and who believe this or that doctrine. My dear friend, let me beseech you to resist the bitter, censorious spirit which like a wasting pestilence has infected the air you breathe. Let us never forget how many purer and wiser minds than ours have viewed Christianity under forms and aspects very different from those which this religion has presented to us.

“ You talk of some persons who hope to be saved, ‘ partly by their own merits and partly by Christ’s.’ I confess I have not met with this description of Christians ; but I can easily conceive that men whose heads are thus confused may still have very good affections. I do know Christians whose hope rests on the *infinite, essential, unmerited, and unpurchased mercy* of God, who think that the freedom and glory of this mercy are diminished by that system which represents it as excited or produced by the merits or vicarious sufferings of another being, and who therefore dislike that unscriptural phrase ‘ the merits of Christ,’ and the common, and as they think unsupported, explications of the atonement. Such Christians, who say nothing about their own worth, and whose fear is that they may throw a stain on the essential mercy and placability of the Father, do not seem to me to err in affections, even though they may in sentiment ; and I have found among them some of the most pious and disinterested of human beings.

“ Your sweeping conclusion about those ‘ who do not think the Son equal to the Father ’ astonished me still more. Can you be ignorant of the scruples of the best minds on this darkest of all doctrines, of the great number of learned and excellent men who have rejected it, and of the many passages of Scripture which

*seem* to contradict it, and which may decide a man's opinions whose heart is devoted to God and truth? Let me ask you to read a popular work on this subject, Worcester's Bible News, not so much with the hope that it may influence your judgment, as that it may teach you respect for those who differ from you. Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, also, will give you some valuable ideas on the nature of faith, a subject which seems to you very obscure, and which Calvinism wraps in tenfold darkness.

"My good friend, if I know myself, I have no *proselyting zeal* about me. I wish only to aid you in recovering the *freedom and independence* of your mind, in order that you may think with calmness and deliberation. . . .

"Your sincere friend."

TO THE REV. NOAH WORCESTER.

"BOSTON, January 11, 1813.

"DEAR SIR, — I have long known you by your writings, and have long wished to express my gratitude to you for the service you have rendered to the cause of truth and free inquiry. But a variety of occupations have prevented.

"I am now led to write you in consequence of the wishes of many in this quarter to establish a work,<sup>1</sup> in which your aid will be very important. It has long been the opinion of many friends of Scriptural truth, that we need a periodical publication which shall be adapted to the great mass of Christians, and the object of which shall be to increase their zeal and seriousness, to direct their attention to the Scriptures, to furnish them with that degree of Biblical criticism which they are capable of receiving and applying, to illustrate obscure and perverted passages, and, though last not least, to teach them their Christian rights, to awaken a zealous attachment to Christian liberty, to show them the ground of Congregationalism, and to guard them against every enemy who would bring them into bondage.

"Our conviction of the importance of this work has been strengthened by the appearance of a publication in The Panoplist, recommending the immediate erection of ecclesiastical tribunals. After conversing about the best means of attaining the end above described, the general question was, 'To whom shall we commit the superintendence of such a periodical?' and we unanimously concurred in the opinion that you are peculiarly fitted for the office of editing it. . . .

"You may expect aid from gentlemen in this town and vicinity.

<sup>1</sup> The Christian Disciple.

With the sentiments of these gentlemen you are generally acquainted. They are not precisely agreed as to the *person or dignity of Christ*, nor do they wish that the work should be devoted to any particular view of that subject. Whilst they are willing to admit the arguments of all sects, they wish chiefly to exhibit those *relations and offices* of Christ which Christians generally acknowledge, and to promote a spirit of forbearance and charity among those who differ in relation to this and other difficult subjects. As to the peculiarities of *Calvinism*, we are opposed to them, without censuring those who embrace those sentiments. We are opposed to that system particularly, inasmuch as it prostrates the independence of the mind, teaches men that they are naturally incapable of discerning religious truth, generates a timid, superstitious dependence on those who profess to have been brought from darkness into light, and so commonly infuses into its professors a censorious and uncharitable spirit.

“ You will do us the justice to believe, that in this business we are not actuated by the spirit of *partisans*. We have long given proof of our aversion to contention by bearing patiently and silently the most grave misrepresentations of our characters and sentiments. We have no desire to diffuse any religious peculiarities. Our great desire is to preserve our fellow-Christians from the systematic and unwearied efforts which are making to impose on them a *human creed* and to infuse into them angry and bitter feelings towards those who differ from them. Our great desire is to direct men to the word of God, and to awaken in those Christians who receive this as their only standard a more devout, serious, earnest, and affectionate piety than they often discover.”

“ BOSTON, April 28, 1815.

“ MY DEAR —, I received your letter of the 21st, and thank you for the confidence in me which it discovers. I am very much interested in the subject of it, and wish to see as far as possible the operation of religious sentiments in the hearts of others. Your simplicity of character is a proof that I have received a tolerably faithful picture of your feelings. I attach vastly less importance to what you have experienced than you do yourself; but God’s providence frequently makes our weaknesses and sufferings the means of our improvement; and I hope that your character will be purified, and your purposes of obedience confirmed, by terrors and emotions which seem to me to imply no supernatural agency.

“ Religion, in my view of it, belongs to man as a rational and moral being. It consists of affections, dispositions, and habits vol-



untarily cherished, and especially founded on just and amiable views of God. The religion which you describe seems to me a tumult of the soul, an involuntary impulse, a triumph of the passions over reason. I think that I respect religion too much to believe that it commonly springs up amidst such disorders, and, I may almost say, ruins, of the rational nature. You seem to me to have yielded yourself up to *terror*, not remembering that this passion, like every other, needs restraint, and that no passion is so apt to pass its bounds and to disorder the mind. The worst superstitions of the heathens originated in terror, and I have no doubt that to this the worst corruptions of Christianity are to be traced. You will grant, my young friend, that, whilst your mind was so powerfully excited by fear, you were not in the best frame for judging correctly of any religious truths. If you have ever seen a man under the influence of a panic, you will recollect that he was in a measure insane, and capable of being led anywhere by a firmer mind. All strong passion has the effect of insanity on the judgment, and makes a man a very different being from what he is in his cooler hours.

“ You will permit me in all frankness to say to you, that I see much of human weakness and timidity in your description of your state before you received comfort, a weakness not peculiar to yourself, but at some periods of life experienced by almost every human being. In fact, we are all in some measure children to the end of life, without firmness where we ought to be most deliberate, and governed by passion where we ought to follow most resolutely the dictates of reflection. As to the joy which followed your depression, it was, I apprehend, a very natural effect. The mind, especially in youth, is soon exhausted by a strong emotion, and is prepared to receive an opposite feeling with peculiar force. Great depression and great joy are often seen to succeed each other. The mind overwhelmed with the thought of danger is equally overwhelmed with transport by the thought of escape. My own temperament is rather equable, but my life is too much made up of successions of feeling. I am sometimes dull and dispirited, and feel as if all my powers and affections were dead. An interesting book, or a religious friend, or other circumstances, will at once awaken me from this low and desponding state, and then a new soul seems kindled within my breast. I have feelings and views so fresh, and tender, and animated, that I hardly appear to myself like the same man. This is the condition of our poor nature; and I have learned to ascribe these changes much more to my physical organization than to any peculiar influences from above. I see and



hear of such vicissitudes of feeling as you describe very frequently, especially among the Methodists and Baptists, and I am nowise disposed to ascribe to hypocrisy the narratives given by these persons of sudden transitions from horrid thoughts and deep distress to a state of peace and assurance of God's favor. I learn, however, from the unhappy issue of many of these conversions, that they deserve little confidence, and that there is but one *sure test of piety* which is *an habitual regard to the will of God*, leading us to correct every unchristian disposition, and to cherish all the virtues of the gospel.

“I think your errors may be traced very much to one source, — unjust and unworthy views of God. This is the great spring of corruption in religion. The great controversies in the church may be resolved into one question, — ‘IS GOD INDEED PERFECTLY GOOD?’ To my mind, most of the prevalent theories of religion rest on the supposition that he is *not* good, that his government is dreadfully severe, and that it is the greatest of evils to receive existence from his hand. I do not mean that these sentiments are professed, but they are really involved in the common theories of Christianity, and by being early fixed in our minds they throw a sad darkness over God, over the present and future life, and prepare men for doctrines which hardly yield in gloominess to some of the superstitions of heathenism. Perhaps it is one of the last lessons which many of us learn, that God is truly good; and perhaps the hardest of all religious duties is to *confide* in his equity and benevolence. The severe views of religion which prevail are thought favorable to piety, very much on the ground that the most rigid monastic institutions were regarded with so much veneration. That these institutions often produced uncommon *strictness* and uncommon *fervor* I do not doubt; but their general influence on the character was not favorable, nor did they promote the great cause of piety.

“You speak of the *creed* you have signed, and justify it on the ground that you ought to show what sense or meaning you give to the Scriptures. When, therefore, you said, ‘that there were three persons in one God,’ you intended by this to give the *meaning* of certain passages of Scripture which have been variously interpreted, or to show in what manner you *understand* them. Now I object to this article, that it wholly fails of its end, that I cannot conceive *what* you *mean* by it; it brings to my mind but one idea, which I know you cannot intend, that one God is three Gods. In using language for the express purpose of showing what we mean, we cannot be too careful to avoid equivocal words, or unusual meanings of common words. The word *person* you use in a sense which I do not comprehend,

and which is wholly unauthorized by common usage. What, then, is gained by forsaking the language of Scripture?

“On reviewing this letter, I find it written in a *manner* which you may possibly misapprehend. There may seem to you a want of tenderness, and a positiveness, which I assure you are far from my heart. I am obliged to write as fast as my pen will run, and in aiming at brevity I have omitted expressions of kindness which my heart would prompt. I have simply wished to guard you against what I deem great errors, and to give you my views of the true spirit of Christianity. I only ask from you calm reflection. I beg that no authority may be given to my sentiments because they are asserted with strength. Confidence is no mark of truth. I wish you to write me with perfect frankness, and to point out what you think my errors. That your character will be improved by the scenes through which you have lately passed is my sincere hope. I shall never love you less for any opposition of sentiment, whilst I discern in your character the badge of a true disciple, which is *love*. As to your entering the ministry, you do well to deliberate. It is a profession to which we should be led by a desire of doing good, and a hope that we shall be more useful in it than in other pursuits. You will excuse any inaccuracies in so hasty and long a letter.

“Yours, affectionately,

“W. E. CHANNING.” ✓✓

1811. FREEDOM OF INQUIRY IN RELIGION. “From the manner in which Christ and his apostles introduced and established the gospel, we learn that they considered religion as a subject on which all men ought to think for themselves, to employ their own minds, to inquire, to deliberate, to fix a serious, impartial attention. It was the wish and intention of the great Founder of our religion, that his religion should be examined, should be received on very different grounds from false religions, should have no support but what it derived from its own excellence, and from the evidences of a Divine interposition by which it was accompanied. . . .

“Christianity everywhere considers it as a settled, conceded point, that men, on the subject of religion, are to exercise their own judgment, and to follow their own conviction. I know it is thought by some that this freedom of inquiry in religion is dangerous, especially to the great mass of mankind. It is thought more safe that a few should lead, and that the multitude should follow. It is said, what is common should be admitted as true, that the hereditary faith of men should never be disturbed by suggesting the importance of examination. . . .

“It is true that the right of private judgment may be abused. Men, under pretence of thinking for themselves, may renounce the plainest and most important truths, may choose to depart from the multitude, and, to show their boldness and independence, may advance sentiments at which a common mind shrinks with horror. But liberty in every form may be abused. There is but one infallible method we can employ of preventing men from doing evil,—they must be bound hand and foot, and not be suffered to exert one power of body or of mind. Give them a power, and they will sometimes misapply it. Furnish a field of action, and they will sometimes go astray. Invigorate the mind, and they will sometimes employ this vigor in accomplishing unworthy ends. Encourage them to examine before they believe, and they will sometimes practise unfairness, dishonesty of mind, and array error in the garb of truth. But these evils form no balance against the innumerable advantages of a vigorous exertion of the powers we possess; and he who, in order to remove these evils, would restrain men’s liberty of thought and action, would rob our nature of everything which ennobles it, and reduce the race almost to the level of brutes. . . .

“The opinion is not entirely correct, that inquiry into religion has produced the multiplicity of sects in the Christian world. I would rather say, that the want of examination has often originated and extended them. The readiness of numbers to embrace what is dogmatically and loudly asserted, what addresses the passions instead of the understanding, has been the greatest temptation to the heads of sects to propagate their peculiarities, and furnishes them with followers. The heads of sects have generally their full share of ambition, and their ambition is fostered and made more active by the common disposition which they see to receive their doctrines without examination. We must not imagine that the way to stifle sects is to encourage men to receive religious opinions without thought or inquiry. In a land of universal toleration, this is the most direct way of laying them open to imposition and enthusiasm. *The only way of producing uniformity is to encourage serious and honest inquiry.*

“This uniformity has sometimes been sought by constraint; but in vain. If, indeed, the power of a state should command one form of religion to be preached, and should prohibit the expression of all others, I grant that something like uniformity would appear. There would be no clamors of contending sects. We should have in their place the silence of the grave. But even in this case there would be no real uniformity of sentiment; for where the activity of



the mind is checked on the subject of religion, men can hardly be said to have any sentiments. They may hear, they may receive words, but all their conceptions are vague. They may utter the same sounds, but as far as they attach any distinct meaning to what they say, the probability is that they resemble each other in opinion as little as do now the different sects. Besides, this vas-salage of mind cannot forever be maintained. There is an elastic force in the human understanding which resists this weight of oppression; and when the enslaved world once obtains freedom, and begins to think for itself, it will by reaction become more devious and extravagant in its operation than if no burden had been imposed. Again I say, the only way to produce lasting uniformity of sentiment is to encourage men to think seriously and honestly on religion, to inquire into the grounds of what they believe, to separate the true from the false, and the clear from the obscure.

“It is the influence of such examination to bring truth to light. Truth is not hidden beneath an impenetrable veil, but reveals herself to the sincere inquirer. Men of this character are not easily led away by noisy declamations, by bold assertions, by high pretensions. They soon learn that true wisdom is not characterized by positiveness, and that those who claim most unreserved assent from others deserve it the least. They demand proof, and this is the last demand which enthusiasm is prepared and inclined to answer. They are not carried away by sounds and names. They do not range themselves under a particular banner and denounce war and destruction on all who take a different standard of belief. Claiming for themselves the right of inquiry, and taught by inquiry that they are prone to err, they become more diffident of their own judgment, and lay aside their censoriousness towards others. And if they do not agree entirely in sentiment with those around them, they still live in peace, and give and receive light; and thus a foundation is laid for real and increasing uniformity of opinion. . . .

“This subject is never uninteresting. It is peculiarly important at the time in which we live, when so many opinions divide the religious world, and so many are summoning us with confidence to come over to them, if we would find truth and salvation. In this state of things we are peculiarly called to examine before we approve. Among the various sects into which our community is broken, none can produce any warrant of infallibility, any appointment to the high office of interpreting the word of God for their brethren. Let us not be swayed by names or numbers; let us not give up our understandings to the sway of the positive and dictatorial. Let us seriously inquire into the grounds of our Christian



faith, and, having established the great principle that Jesus Christ\* is the authorized teacher and light of mankind, let us repair to his word, where he speaks to us and to all mankind, and with sincere, honest, humble, impartial minds, desirous to receive and resolved to obey his truth, let us earnestly meditate on his instruction.

“If once we forsake this guide, to whom shall we attach ourselves? If once we choose to rest on human authority, whom shall we select as our teacher out of the multitude who wish to number us among their proselytes? What pledge have we, that we shall not throw ourselves into the arms of the most deluded? Let us, then, stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free. Let us receive nothing because positively asserted by others. And neither let us settle down in our own present conceptions, as if they were infallibly right and could not be corrected. Let us avoid equally the desire of singularity and the desire of conformity, and with dispassionate, unprejudiced minds follow our Master wherever he shall lead.”

EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER, ETC., TO THE REV. SAMUEL C. THACHER.

“June 20, 1815.

“MY FRIEND AND BROTHER, — I have recollected with much satisfaction the conversation which we held the other morning, on the subject of the late Review, in the Panoplist for June, of a pamphlet called ‘American Unitarianism.’ . . . After leaving you, my thoughts still dwelt on the subject; and, painful as is the task, I have thought it my duty to exhibit to the public the topics which we discussed, as well as to add some reflections suggested by private meditation.

“I bring to the subject a feeling which I cannot well express in words, but which you can easily understand. It is a feeling as if I were degrading myself by noticing the false and injurious charges contained in this Review. I feel as if I were admitting that we need vindication, that our reputations want support, that our characters and lives do not speak for themselves. My self-respect, too, is wounded, by coming into contact with assailants who not only deny us the name of Christians, but withhold from us the treatment of gentlemen. These feelings, united with my love of peace, would induce me to pass over the Review in silence, if it were limited to the sphere within which we are personally known. In this sphere, I trust, its bitterness, coarseness, and misrepresentations will work their own cure; and that no other defence is required, but the tenor of our ministry and lives. But the work in

which this article is published is industriously spread through the country, and through all classes of society. The aspersions which it contains are also diffused, as widely as possible, by conversation, and even by newspapers. We owe, then, to ourselves, and, what is more important, to the cause of Christian truth and charity, some remarks on the representations and spirit of the Review. . . .

"The Panoplist Review, though extended over so many pages, may be compressed into a very narrow space. It asserts, —

"1. That the great body of Liberal ministers in this town and its vicinity, and of Liberal Christians, are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word; that is, they believe that Jesus Christ is a mere man, who when on earth was liable to error and sin; to whom we owe no gratitude for benefits which we are now receiving; and for whose future interposition we have no reason to hope.

"2. The Review asserts that these ministers and Liberal Christians are guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments, and behave in a base, cowardly, and hypocritical manner.

"3. Christians are called to come out and separate themselves from these ministers and the Liberal body of Christians, and to withhold from them Christian communion.

"I will consider these three heads in their order.

"The first assertion to be considered is, that the great body of Liberal ministers in this town and vicinity, and of Liberal Christians,<sup>1</sup> are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of that word. . . . It is unnecessary to multiply extracts to show, that not only Boston,

<sup>1</sup> "I have used the phrase or denomination *Liberal Christians* because it is employed by the Reviewer to distinguish those whom he assails. I have never been inclined to claim this appellation for myself or my friends, because, as the word *liberality* expresses the noblest qualities of the human mind, — freedom from local prejudices and narrow feelings, the enlargement of the views and affections, — I have thought that the assumption of it would savor of that spirit which has attempted to limit the words *orthodox* and *evangelical* to a particular body of Christians. As the appellation, however, cannot well be avoided, I will state the meaning which I attach to it.

"By a Liberal Christian, I understand one who is disposed to receive as his brethren in Christ all who, in the judgment of charity, sincerely profess to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master. He rejects all tests or standards of Christian faith and of Christian character, but the word of Jesus Christ and of his inspired apostles. He thinks it an act of disloyalty to his Master to introduce into the church creeds of fallible men as bonds of union, or terms of Christian fellowship. He calls himself by no name derived from human leaders, disclaims all exclusive connection with any sect or party, professes himself a member of the Church Universal on earth and in heaven, and cheerfully extends the hand of brotherhood to every man of every name who discovers the spirit of Jesus Christ.

"According to this view of Liberal Christians, they cannot be called a party.

but its vicinity, is involved in the charge. In fact, the Liberal party, in general, is ranged under the standard of Mr. Belsham. Now we both of us know this statement to be false. . . .

“The word *Unitarianism*, as denoting opposition to Trinitarianism, undoubtedly expresses the character of a considerable part of the ministers of this town and its vicinity, and the Commonwealth. But we both of us know that their Unitarianism is of a very different kind from that of Mr. Belsham. We agreed in our late conference, that a majority of our brethren believe that Jesus Christ is more than man, that he existed before the world, that he literally came from heaven to save our race, that he sustains other offices than those of a teacher and witness to the truth, and that he still acts for our benefit, and is our intercessor with the Father. This we agreed to be the prevalent sentiment of our brethren. There is another class of Liberal Christians, who, whilst they reject the distinction of three persons in God, are yet unable to pass a definite judgment on the various systems which prevail, as to the nature and rank of Jesus Christ. They are met by difficulties on every side, and generally rest in the conclusion, that He whom God has appointed to be our Saviour must be precisely adapted to his work, and that acceptable faith consists in regarding and following him as our Lord, Teacher, and Saviour; without deciding on his nature or rank in the universe. There is another class, who believe the simple humanity of Jesus Christ; but these form a small proportion of the great body of Unitarians in this part of our country; and I very much doubt whether of these one individual can be found, who could conscientiously subscribe to Mr. Belsham’s creed as given in the Review. The conduct of the Reviewer, in collecting all the opinions of that gentleman, not only on the Trinity, but on every other theological subject, in giving to the *whole* collection the name of *Unitarianism*, and in exhibiting this to the world as the creed of Liberal Christians in this region, is perhaps as criminal an instance of unfairness as is to be found in the records

They are distinguished only by refusing to separate themselves in any form or degree from the great body of Christ. They are scattered, too, through all classes of Christians. I have known Trinitarians and Calvinists who justly deserve the name of Liberal, who regard with affection all who appear to follow Jesus Christ in temper and life, however they may differ on the common points of theological controversy. To this class of Christians, which is scattered over the earth, and which I trust has never been extinct in any age, I profess and desire to belong. God send them prosperity!—In this part of the country, Liberal Christians, as they have been above described, are generally, though by no means universally, Unitarians, in the proper sense of that word. It is of this part of them that I chiefly speak in this letter.”



of theological controversy. The fact is, that the great body of Liberal Christians would shrink from some of these opinions with as much aversion as from some of the gloomy doctrines of Calvin. . . .

“I trust that the statement which has now been made will not be considered as casting the least reproach on those amongst us, who believe in the simple humanity of Jesus Christ. Whilst I differ from them in opinion, I have certainly no disposition to deny them the name and privileges of Christians. There are gentlemen of this class, whom I have the happiness to know, in whom I discover the evidences of a scrupulous uprightness and a genuine piety; and there are others, whose characters, as portrayed by their biographers, appear to me striking examples of the best influences of Christianity. . . .

“I now come to the second charge of the Review: That the liberal ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the most considerable members of the Liberal party, ‘operate in secret; intrust only the initiated with their measures; are guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments; behave in a base and hypocritical manner.’ . . . This charge is infinitely more serious than the first. To believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime. But artifice, plotting, hypocrisy, *are* crimes; and if we practise them, we deserve to be driven, not only from the ministry, not only from the Church, but from the society of the decent and respectable. Our own hearts, I trust, tell us at once how gross are these aspersions; and our acquaintance with our brethren authorizes us to speak in their vindication with the same confidence as in our own.

“It is not to be wondered at, that those who have charged us with holding sentiments which we reject should proceed to charge us with hypocritically concealing our sentiments. Most of us have often contradicted Mr. Belsham’s opinions; and they who insist that these opinions are ours will be forced to maintain that we practise deceit. They start with a falsehood, and their conclusion cannot therefore be true. I am not, however, disposed to dismiss this charge of artifice and hypocrisy so lightly. . . . As to myself, I have ever been inclined to cherish the most exalted views of Jesus Christ which are consistent with the supremacy of the Father; and I have felt it my duty to depart from Mr. Belsham in perhaps every sentiment which is peculiar to him on this subject. I have always been pleased with some of the sentiments of Dr. Watts on the intimate and peculiar union between the Father and Son. But I have always abstained most scrupulously from every expression which could be construed into an acknowledgment of the Trinity. My



worship and sentiments have been Unitarian, in the proper sense of that word. In conversation with my people, who have requested my opinion upon the subject, especially with those who consider themselves Trinitarians, I have spoken with directness and simplicity. Some of those who differ from me most widely have received from me the most explicit assurances of my disbelief of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of my views in relation to the Saviour. As to my brethren in general, never have I imagined for a moment, from their preaching or conversation, that they had the least desire to be considered as Trinitarians; nor have I ever heard from them any views of God or of Jesus Christ but Unitarian, in the proper meaning of that word.

“It is indeed true, that we seldom or never introduce the Trinitarian controversy into our pulpits. We are accustomed to speak of the Father as the only living and true God, and of Jesus Christ as his Son, as a distinct being from him, as dependent on him, subordinate to him, and deriving all from him. This phraseology pervades all our prayers and all our preaching. We seldom or never, however, refer to any different sentiments, embraced by other Christians, on the nature of God or of Jesus Christ. We preach precisely as if no such doctrine as the Trinity had ever been known. We do not attempt to refute it, any more than to refute the systems of the Sabellians, the Eutychians, or the Nestorians, or of the other sects who have debated these questions with such hot and unprofitable zeal. But, in following this course, we are not conscious of having contracted, in the least degree, the guilt of insincerity. We have aimed at making no false impression. We have only followed a general system, which we are persuaded to be best for our people and for the cause of Christianity; the system of excluding controversy as much as possible from our pulpits. In compliance with this system, I have never assailed Trinitarianism; nor have I ever said one word against Methodism, Quakerism, Episcopalianism, or the denomination of Baptists; and I may add Popery, if I except a few occasional remarks on the intolerance of that system. The name of these sects, with that single exception, has never passed my lips in preaching, through my whole ministry, which has continued above twelve years. We all of us think it best to *preach the truth*, or what we esteem to be the truth, and to say very little about error, unless it be error of a strictly *practical* nature. A striking proof of our sentiments and habits on this subject may be derived from the manner in which you and myself have treated Calvinism. We consider the errors which relate to Christ’s person as of little or no importance, compared with the error of those who teach that God

brings us into life wholly depraved and wholly helpless, that he leaves multitudes without that aid which is indispensably necessary to their repentance, and then plunges them into everlasting burnings and unspeakable torture for not repenting. This we consider as one of the most injurious errors which ever darkened the Christian world; and none will pretend that we have anything to fear from exposing this error to our people. On the contrary, we could hardly select a more popular topic; and yet our hearers will bear witness how seldom we introduce this topic into our preaching. The name of Calvinist has never, I presume, been uttered by us in the pulpit. Our method is, to state what we conceive to be more honorable, and ennobling, and encouraging views of God's character and government, and to leave these to have their effect, without holding up other Christians to censure or contempt. We could, if we were to make strenuous efforts, render the name of Calvinist as much a word of reproach in our societies, as that of Unitarian is in some parts of our country. But we esteem it a solemn duty to disarm, instead of exciting, the bad passions of our people. We wish to promote among them a spirit of universal charity. We wish to make them condemn their own bad practices, rather than the erroneous speculations of their neighbor. We love them too sincerely to imbue them with the spirit of controversy.

"In thus avoiding controversy, we have thought that we deserved, not reproach, but some degree of praise for our self-denial. Every preacher knows how much easier it is to write a controversial than a practical discourse; how much easier it is to interest an audience by attacking an opposite party, than by stating to them the duties and motives of the gospel. We often feel that our mode of preaching exposes us to the danger of being trite and dull; and I presume we have often been tempted to gratify the love of disputation which lurks in every society. But so deeply are we convinced that the great end of preaching is to promote a spirit of love, a sober, righteous, and godly life, and that every doctrine is to be urged simply and exclusively for this end, that we have sacrificed our ease, and have chosen to be less striking preachers, rather than to enter the lists of controversy.

"We have seldom or never assailed the scheme of the Trinity, not only from our dislike to controversy in general, but from a persuasion that this discussion would, above all others, perplex, and needlessly perplex, a common congregation, consisting of persons of all ages, capacities, degrees of improvement, and conditions in society. This doctrine we all regard as the most unintelligible about which Christians have ever disputed. If it do not mean that

there are three Gods (a construction which its advocates indig-  
nantly repel), we know not what it means; and we have not  
thought that we should edify common hearers by attacking a doc-  
trine altogether inconceivable, and wholly beyond the grasp of our  
faculties. We have recollected, too, the mischiefs of the Trinitar-  
ian controversy in past ages, that it has been a firebrand lighting  
the flames of persecution, and kindling infernal passions in the  
breasts of Christians; and we have felt no disposition to interest  
the feelings of our congregation in a dispute which has so disgraced  
the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus. Many of us  
have been disinclined, not only to assail systems which we do not  
believe, but even to enforce the views which we have given of the  
rank and character of Jesus Christ; because we have known how  
divided the best men have been on these topics, and how largely we  
ourselves partake of the fallibility of our nature; because we have  
wished that our hearers should derive their impressions on these  
points as much as possible from the Scriptures; and because we  
have all been persuaded that precision of views upon these subjects  
is in no degree essential to the faith or practice of a Christian. We  
have considered the introduction of the Trinitarian controversy into  
the pulpit as the less necessary, because we have generally found  
that common Christians admit that distinction between God and  
his Son, and that subordination of the Son, which we believe to be  
the truth; and as to that very small part of our hearers who are  
strongly attached to the doctrine of the Trinity, while we have not  
wished to conceal from them our difference of opinion, we have  
been fully satisfied that the most effectual method of promoting  
their holiness and salvation was to urge on them perpetually those  
great truths and precepts about which there is little contention, and  
which have an immediate bearing on the temper and the life. To  
conclude, we have never entered into discussions of the doctrine of  
the Trinity, because we are not governed by a proselyting temper.  
I will venture to assert, that there is not on earth a body of men  
who possess less of the spirit of proselytism than the ministers of  
this town and vicinity. Accustomed as we are to see genuine piety  
in all classes of Christians, in Trinitarians and Unitarians, in Cal-  
vinists and Arminians, in Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, and  
Congregationalists, and delighting in this character wherever it ap-  
pears, we are little anxious to bring men over to our peculiar opin-  
ions. I could smile at the idea of a Unitarian plot, were not this  
fiction intended to answer so unworthy an end. There cannot be a  
doubt, that, had we seriously united for the purpose of spreading  
Unitarianism by any and every means, by secret insinuations



against those who differ from us, by uncharitable denunciations, and by the other usual arts of sects, we might have produced in this part of the country a Unitarian heat and bitterness not inferior to that with which Trinitarianism is too often advocated. But not the slightest whisper of any concert for this end has ever reached me; and as to these arts, our people can best say how far we have practised them. Our people will testify how little we have sought to influence them on the topics of dispute among Christians, how little we have labored to make them partisans, how constantly we have besought them to look with candor on other denominations, and to delight in all the marks which others exhibit of piety and goodness. Our great and constant object has been to promote the *spirit of Christ*, and we have been persuaded that in this way we should most effectually promote the interests of Christian truth. . . . .

“I now come to the third head of the Review, which I propose to consider. The Reviewer, having charged us with holding the opinions of Mr. Belsham, and hypocritically concealing them, solemnly calls on Christians who differ from us in sentiment ‘to come out and be separate from us, and to withhold communion with us.’ . . . . This language does not astonish me, when I recollect the cry of heresy which has been so loudly raised against this part of the country. But I believe that this is the first instance in which Christians have been deliberately called to deny us the Christian name and privileges. As such, let it be remembered; and let the consequences of it lie on its authors.

“Why is it that our brethren are thus instigated to cut us off, as far as they have power, from the body and church of Christ? Let every Christian weigh well the answer. It is not because we refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master; it is not because we neglect to study his word; it is not because our lives are wanting in the spirit and virtues of his gospel. It is because, after serious investigation, we cannot find in the Scriptures, and cannot adopt as instructions of our Master, certain doctrines which have divided the Church for ages, which have perplexed the best and wisest men, and which are very differently conceived even by those who profess to receive them. It is, in particular, because we cannot adopt the language of our brethren in relation to a doctrine which we cannot understand, and which is expressed in words not only unauthorized by the Scripture, but, as we believe, in words employed without meaning (unless they mean that there are three Gods) by those who insist upon them. This is our crime, that we cannot think and speak with our brethren on subjects the most



difficult and perplexing on which the human mind was ever engaged. For this we are pursued with the cry of heresy, and are to have no rest until virtually excommunicated by our brethren. . . .

“Most earnestly do I wish that the Dissertation of Dr. Campbell on Heresy, in his Translation of the Four Gospels, was more generally read and considered. He has proved, I think, very satisfactorily, that heresy, as the word is used in the Scriptures, does not consist in the adoption or profession of wrong opinions, but in a spirit of division, of dissension, of party, in a factious and turbulent temper; and that the heretic is not a man who entertains erroneous or even injurious sentiments, but one who loves to be called Rabbi and master; who has a disposition to separate Christians, to create or to extend sects and parties. . . . Let Christians weigh well the nature and guilt of schism, the consequences of separation, and the spirit of their religion, before they adopt the measure recommended in this Review. For myself, the universe would not tempt me to bear a part in this work of dividing Christ’s church, and of denouncing his followers. If there be an act which, above all others, is a transgression of the Christian law, it is this. . . . I know it will be said that Christians are not called upon to reject real Christians, but heretics and false pretenders to the name. But heresy, we have seen, is not a false opinion, but a sectarian spirit: and as to false pretences, we desire those who know us to put their hands on their hearts, and to say whether they can for a moment believe that we hypocritically profess to follow the instructions of Jesus Christ. Does charity discover nothing in our language and lives to justify the hope that we are united to Jesus Christ by love for his character, and by participation of his spirit? . . .

“I wish that my motives for these earnest remonstrances against division may be understood. I feel as little personal interest in the subject as any individual in the community. Were the proposed separation to take place, I should still enjoy the ordinances of the gospel in the society of those whom I best love. The excommunication which is threatened gives me no alarm. I hear this angry thunder murmur at a distance, with as little concern as if it were the thunder of the Pope, from whom it seems, indeed, to be borrowed. But whilst I fear nothing for myself, I do fear and feel for that body of which Christ is the head, which has been bleeding for ages under the contests of Christians, and which is now threatened with a new wound. I feel for the cause of our common Christianity, which I am set to defend, and which has suffered inconceivably more from the bad passions and divisions of its friends than from all the arts and violence of its foes. I cannot but look forward

with pain to the irritations, hatreds, bitter recriminations, censoriousness, spiritual pride, and schismatical spirit which will grow up under this system of denunciation and exclusion, and which may not only convulse many churches at the present moment, but will probably end in most unhappy divisions among the very Christians who denounce us; who seem indeed to be united, now that a common enemy is to be trodden under foot, but who have sufficient diversities of opinion to awaken against each other all the fury of intolerance, when this shall have become the temper and habit of their minds. I repeat it, I have no interest in this point but as a Christian; and as such, I look with a degree of horror on this attempt to inflame and distract our churches. Error of opinion is an evil too trifling to be named, in comparison with this practical departure from the gospel, with this proud, censorious, overbearing temper, which says to a large body of Christians, 'Stand off, we are holier than you.' . . . .

"Having thus considered the three principal heads in the Review, I now proceed to offer a few words of friendly admonition, as to the temper and conduct which become our brethren and ourselves, under the injuries which we receive.

"The first suggestion you have undoubtedly anticipated. It is, that we remember the great duty which belongs to us as Christians, of regarding our enemies with good-will, if possible with a degree of approbation, at least with displeasure tempered with compassion. . . . As to the great mass of those Christians who view us with so much jealousy, we must remember that they know us only by report, that they believe as they are taught by men to whom they ascribe an eminent sanctity, and that they are liable to be carried away on this, as on every other subject, by loud assertion, and by addresses to their fears. Accustomed as they are to hear us branded with names and epithets, to which they have attached no definite ideas, but which seem to them to express everything depraved, can we wonder that they shrink from us with a kind of terror? To this great class of our opposers we certainly owe nothing but kindness; and we should esteem it an unspeakable happiness, that we can look with so much pleasure and hope on those by whom we are dreaded and shunned; that we are not obliged by our system to regard *our* adversaries as the enemies of God, and the objects of his wrath. On this point, above all others, I would be urgent. Our danger is, that reproach will hurry us into language or conduct unbecoming the spirit of our Master. Let us remember that our opposers cannot ultimately injure us, unless we permit them to awaken bad passions, and to impair our virtues. Let us

remember what is due from us to our religion. The more uncharitable our age is, the more the glory of the gospel is obscured by its being exhibited as a source of censoriousness and contention, the more we owe it to our Lord to wipe off this reproach from his truth, to show the loveliness of his religion, to show its power in changing the heart into the image of divine forbearance and forgiveness. . . .

“Another important suggestion is this : Let us hold fast our uprightness. . . . That our churches are to be generally shaken by the assault which is made upon them, I am far from believing. But some may suffer. It is not impossible that the efforts which are now employed to direct against us the uncharitableness and mistaken zeal of the country, and to spread disaffection through the most uninstructed and the most easily excited classes of society, may produce some effect. We know the fluctuations of the human mind. We know that the sincerest Christians are often unduly influenced by timidity, and may be brought to suspect a minister, when he is decried as a heretic who is leading souls to hell. It requires more strength of nerves and more independence of mind than all good people possess to withstand this incessant clamor. A storm, then, may be gathering over some of us, and the sufferers may be tempted to bend to it. But God forbid, my friend, that any of us should give support to the aspersions cast on our uprightness, by ever suppressing our convictions, or speaking a language foreign to our hearts. Through good report and through evil report, let us with simplicity and sincerity declare what we believe to be the will of God and the way to heaven, and thus secure to ourselves that peace of conscience which is infinitely better than the smiles of the world. Let us never forget that the most honored condition on earth is that of being sufferers for the sake of righteousness, for adherence to what we deem the cause of God and holiness ; and let us welcome suffering, if it shall be appointed us, as bringing us nearer to our persecuted Lord and his injured apostles. My brother, we profess to count man’s judgment as a light thing, to esteem this world and all which it offers to be vanity. We profess to look up to a heavenly inheritance, and to hope that we shall one day mingle with angels and just men made perfect. And with these sublime hopes, shall we tremble before frail and fallible fellow-creatures, be depressed by difficulties, or shrink from the expression of what we deem important and useful truth? God forbid !

“I have time to add but one more suggestion. Let us beware lest opposition and reproach lead any of us into a sectarian attachment to our peculiar opinions. This is a danger to which persons of ardent and irritable temper are peculiarly exposed. Too many



of us are apt to cling to a system in proportion as it is assailed, to consider ourselves pledged to doctrines which we have openly espoused, to rally round them as if our own honor and interest were at stake, and to assert them with more and more positiveness, as if we were incapable of error. This is the infirmity of our frail nature; and whilst we condemn it in others, let us not allow it in ourselves. Let us be what we profess to be, patient inquirers after truth, open to conviction, willing to listen to objections, willing to renounce error, willing to believe that we, as well as others, may have been warped in our opinions by education and situation, and that others may have acquired important truths which, through weakness or prejudice, we may have overlooked. Were we a party, anxious to make proselytes, we should do well to be positive and overbearing. But we profess to be anxious that our fellow-Christians should inquire for themselves into the difficulties of religion, instead of implicitly receiving what we have embraced. We profess to believe that candid and impartial research will guide mankind to a purer system of Christianity than is now to be found in any church or country under heaven. Most earnestly do I hope that we shall not be betrayed by any violence of assault into a sectarian heat and obstinacy, which will discredit our profession, and obstruct this glorious reformation of the Church of God."

EXTRACTS FROM REMARKS ON THE REV. DR. WORCESTER'S LETTER  
TO MR. CHANNING.

*August, 1815.* "By the advice of friends whose judgment I respect, I have resolved to offer to the public some remarks on the letter of Dr. Worcester in reply to mine addressed to Mr. Thacher. They will be few in number, and as free as possible from personalities. . . .

"My letter to Mr. Thacher is considered by Dr. Worcester as bitter and severe; but, called as I was to repel the charge of immorality brought against men whose virtue and piety I know and honor, and to whom I am bound by ties of friendship and Christian affection, I felt it a solemn duty to express what I deemed a virtuous indignation. I labored, however, to temper displeasure with Christian moderation; and, on finishing my letter, my fear was, not that I had expressed an improper warmth, but that I should be considered as wanting in sensibility to the injuries done to some of the best men in this community. I know, however, the many weaknesses and imperfections of my nature. I may have erred, for the provocation was great; and I sincerely repeat the declara-



tion with which I closed my letter, that for every departure from the spirit of the gospel I implore the Divine forgiveness. . . .

“One great object of Dr. Worcester’s letter, if I understand him, is to convey to his readers the impression, that the mode of preaching of Liberal ministers is ‘concealed, indistinct, and unfaithful.’ This he attempts to prove, first, from the statement which I made of the views of Liberal Christians in relation to the character of Jesus Christ. This statement, he says, is ambiguous. That it is general, that it does not descend to particulars, I grant; but I deny that it is ambiguous, if considered, as it ought to be, in relation to the object for which it was made. It was simply designed to repel the charge of the Reviewer, that we are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word. Was it necessary that in such a statement every question should be met and answered, which might possibly be started in relation to our sentiments? . . .

“The next proof of our preaching in a ‘concealed, indistinct, and unfaithful manner’ is derived from the account which I have given of our general style of preaching. . . . My statement was plainly this: that we labor to preach the truth, to preach whatever we clearly discover in the word of God; but that, in doing this, we generally avoid references to opinions which we do not receive, and never hold up those Christians who differ from us to censure or contempt. According to this statement, we evidently preach the whole counsel of God, as far as we understand it. But Dr. Worcester, passing over this account, has selected a passage in which I observe that ‘we urge perpetually those great *truths* and *precepts* about which there is little contention, and which have an immediate bearing on the temper and life.’ From this passage he infers that we can urge none of the ‘primary and peculiar doctrines and institutions of the gospel, because about all these there has been great contention.’ To this I answer, first, that I have never understood that there has been much contention about the ‘great *precepts*’ of the gospel, not even about those which have been most habitually disregarded. Christians, satisfied with dismissing these from their lives, have retained them in their systems. Even the bitterest persecutors in the Church have never disputed the precepts of ‘loving their neighbor as themselves,’ and of ‘doing to others as they would have others do to them.’ . . . It may next be observed, that the common disputes about the ‘great *doctrines*’ of the gospel have not related so much to their truth and importance as to some inferior points connected with them. For example, there has been much debate about the benevolence of God, whether it forms his whole moral character and his highest spring of action,

or whether it be subordinate to wisdom or rectitude ; but all parties have agreed that God is benevolent. In the same manner, many have disputed about the omnipresence of God, whether his substance be extended through infinite space, or whether he be present only by his knowledge and power to every portion of space ; but all have agreed that God is omnipresent. In like manner, Christians have disputed about the precise way in which Christ's death has an influence on our forgiveness ; but that it has a real and important influence on forgiveness almost all unite in asserting. Once more, Christians have never been weary with disputing on the mode and extent of spiritual influences ; but, with very few exceptions, all maintain that these influences are real, and are promised to our prayers. Let no one, then, say, that we preach no primary or peculiar doctrines of Christianity, because we insist perpetually on principles in which the different classes of Christians generally concur. Such principles, we sincerely believe, form the very substance and glory of the gospel. They shine with a clear and unsullied splendor. We are deeply impressed with their truth, their supreme importance, and their sufficiency to salvation ; and therefore we urge them with unwearied importunity, with zeal and affection.

“ It is possible that Dr. Worcester will go on to object, that, according to this very account, our preaching must be extremely general, vague, wanting in precision, and therefore unfaithful. The answer is short. If we are indeed general and vague in our representation of the truths of the gospel, it is *because we are faithful*, because we dare not be precise above what is written, because we stop where the Scriptures seem to us to stop, and because we have a very deep and sorrowful persuasion that our religion has been exceedingly defaced and corrupted by the bold attempts of theologians to give minute explanations of its general truths, and to cramp it with the fetters of systematic precision. We tell our hearers, that God sent his Son to die for us, exalted him to be our Prince and Saviour, and ordained him to be Judge of the quick and dead, and never think it necessary or faithful to fill up the outline of Scripture, by adding, that the Son who was sent was the very God who sent him, or by speculating on the infinite evil of sin, and on the necessity of an infinite atonement, in order to illustrate the fitness of such a mediator. Thus, then, we preach. Whether our preaching be nothing more than the inculcation of ‘ natural religion,’ let our hearers determine. . . .

“ It is urged, that our sentiments lead us into an entire indifference to Christian truth ; that we believe all error to be innocent ;

that we consider belief in the truth as no virtue ; and that we thus set aside those passages of Scripture in which the highest importance is attached to this belief. This objection is founded on our extending the name and privileges of Christians to the lowest Unitarians, who hold some sentiments from which, as I stated, we generally shrink with aversion. Now I deny that any indifference to truth, or any contempt of those passages which enjoin belief of the truth, is implied in this extension of our charity. . . . The *faith* to which salvation is promised in Scripture seems to us to reside in the heart much more than in the understanding. The true believer is distinguished, not by clearness and extent of views, but by a 'love of light,' a 'love of the truth,' originating in a sincere desire to 'do the will of God.' . . .

"This love of divine truth, this honest, unprejudiced, obedient mind, we highly venerate, and always enjoin as essential to salvation. But we know that this love of truth is consistent with the reception of many errors. We know that the apostles, during the life of their Master, possessed this temper in a sufficient degree to constitute them his followers, and yet they grossly misunderstood some of his plainest and most important declarations. We believe, too, that, at the present day, many in every Christian country are placed in circumstances almost, if not quite, as unfavorable to a clear understanding of the gospel, as the apostles were under the ministry of Jesus. From considerations of this nature, from a knowledge of the amazing power of education and other circumstances over the opinions of every mind, and from a fear that we, as well as others, may have been swayed and blinded by unsuspected infelicities attending our condition, we are very unwilling to decide on the degree of truth which is required for the salvation of every individual, or to say that the errors of an apparently sincere professor of Christianity are inconsistent with a pious character. In our judgment of professed Christians, we are guided more by their temper and lives than by any peculiarities of opinion. We lay it down as a great and indisputable principle, clear as the sun at noonday, that the great end for which Christian truth is revealed is the sanctification of the soul, the formation of the Christian character ; and wherever we see the marks of this character displayed in a professed disciple of Jesus, we hope, and rejoice to hope, that he has received all the truth which is necessary to his salvation. Acting on this rule, we cannot exclude from the Church the lowest Unitarians who profess subjection to Jesus Christ. Of this class we have known or heard of individuals who have breathed the genuine spirit of their Master ; who have discovered a singular consci-



entiousness in all the walks of life ; whose charity has overflowed in good deeds ; whose wills have been resigned in affliction ; and who lived as seeking a better country, even a heavenly. Such men we have not dared to exclude from the Christian Church, on the ground of what seem to us great errors, any more than to exclude the disciples of Calvin ; whose errors we also deeply lament, but whose errors are often concealed from us by the brightness of their Christian virtues.

“ We are not conscious that by this liberality we at all oppose those passages of Scripture in which great stress is laid upon belief of the truth ; for we are convinced, from laborious research into the Scriptures, that the great truth which is the object of Christian belief, and which in the first age conferred the character of disciples on all who received it, is simply this, that *Jesus is the Christ*, or anointed by God to be the light and Saviour of the world. Whenever this great truth appears to us to be sincerely acknowledged, whenever a man of apparent uprightness declares to us his reception of Jesus in this character, and his corresponding purpose to study and obey his religion, we feel ourselves bound to give him the hand of Christian fellowship, and to leave it to the final Judge to determine how far he is faithful in searching after the will of his Lord. This duty of searching, and of searching with humility and with a single and fearless regard to truth, we constantly inculcate ; and we sincerely believe that in this way we approve ourselves friends of truth much more decidedly than if we should aim to terrify and prostrate the minds of our hearers by threatening them with everlasting misery, unless they receive the peculiar views of the gospel which we have seen fit to espouse. . . .

“ The principal argument which Dr. Worcester offers in favor of the proposed separation of Trinitarians and Unitarians is the great differences between them. I sincerely regret that these differences are so studiously magnified, whilst the points of agreement between these classes of Christians are as studiously overlooked. Dr. Watts and Dr. Doddridge have left us a better example. Trinitarians and Unitarians both believe in one God, one infinite and self-existent mind. According to the first, this God is three persons ; according to the last, he is one person. Ought this difference, which relates to the obscurest of all subjects, to the essence and metaphysical nature of God, and which common Christians cannot understand, to divide and alienate those who ascribe to this one God the same perfections, who praise him for the same blessings, who hope from his mercy the same forgiveness, who receive on his authority the same commands, and who labor to maintain the same



spirit of devotion to his will and glory? According to Trinitarians, Jesus, who suffered and died on the cross, is a derived being, *personally* united with the self-existent God. According to the Unitarians, he is a derived being, *intimately* united with the self-existent God. Ought this difference, which transcends the conception of common Christians, to divide and alienate those who love the same excellent character in Jesus Christ, who desire to breathe his spirit and follow his steps, who confide in him as perfectly adapted to the work which he was sent to accomplish, and who labor to derive just conceptions of his nature from his own instructions? The differences between Trinitarians and Unitarians are very often verbal. As soon as Trinitarians attempt to show the consistency of their doctrine of three persons with the Divine unity, their peculiarities begin to vanish, and in many of their writings little or nothing is left but one God acting in three characters, or sustaining three relations, and intimately united with his son Jesus Christ. Ought distinctions so subtle and perplexing to separate those who love the same Divine character, and respect the same Divine will?

“Dr. Worcester, however, seems disposed to widen the breach between these classes of believers. He says, the Saviour ‘whom you acknowledge is infinitely inferior to ours.’ I answer, we believe that God saves us by his son Jesus Christ, in whom he dwells, and through whom he bestows pardon and eternal life. A higher Saviour we do not know, and cannot conceive. But Dr. Worcester does not stop here. He says, ‘The God whom you worship is different from ours.’ To this I answer, as others have answered before, that I with my brethren worship ‘the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who hath glorified his son Jesus,’ whom Peter preached. (Acts iii.) We worship ‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ to whom Paul ‘bowed the knee.’ We worship that God whom Jesus in his last moments worshipped, when he said, ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.’ We worship that God to whom our Lord directed us, when he put into our lips these affecting words, ‘Our Father who art in heaven.’ We worship that God of whom our Master spoke in these memorable words: ‘The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.’ Dr. Worcester speaks of a different God; but we can renounce ours for no other. This worship we are persuaded is a spring of purity, joy, and hope; and we trust that it will prove to us a source of unfailling consolation amidst the trials, reproaches, and rude assaults of the world. — But I must stop. The points of dispute between Unitarians and Trinitarians cannot be treated with any fairness within the narrow

compass of a pamphlet, and I wish not to discuss them in connection with the present controversy, which primarily relates to the *moral character* of the great body of Liberal Christians.

“Dr. Worcester has labored to show, that charity, instead of forbidding, encourages and requires Trinitarians to exclude Unitarians from Christian fellowship, because charity commands us to promote truth, and truth is promoted by this system of exclusion. But let me ask, Why is truth to be promoted? Not for its own sake, but for its influence on the heart, its influence in forming a Christian temper. In what, then, does this temper consist? very much in candor, forbearance, and kind affection. It follows, that any method of promoting truth which is unfriendly to these virtues is unchristian; it sacrifices the end to the means of religion. Now let me ask, whether the practice of rejecting as ungodly men those who differ from us on subtle, perplexing, and almost (if not altogether) unintelligible doctrines, be not obviously and directly opposed to the exercise and diffusion of candor, forbearance, kind affection, and peace. Has it not actually convulsed the church for ages with discord and war? The right of denouncing those who differ on such doctrines, if granted to one Christian, must be granted to all; and do we need the spirit of prophecy to foretell the consequences, if the ignorant, passionate, and enthusiastic, who form the majority of every community, shall undertake to carry this right into practice? The idea, that a religion which is designed for weak and fallible mortals of all classes and capacities, and which is designed to promote unity, peace, candor, and love, should yet make it our duty to reject, as wholly destitute of goodness, every man, however uniform in conduct, who cannot see as we do on points where we ourselves see little or nothing, appears to me the grossest contradiction and absurdity. If this be Christianity, we may say anything of our religion more truly, than that it is a religion of peace. A more effectual instrument of discord was never devised. Charity, then, does not command the Trinitarian to exclude his Unitarian brother. Charity commands us to use mildness and persuasion; to open our eyes to the marks of virtue in those from whom we differ; to beware of ascribing error to a corrupt heart, unless the proof be striking; to think modestly of ourselves, and to drive from our minds the conceit of infallibility, that most dangerous error which ever crept into the Church of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “I cannot forbear earnestly desiring Christians to obtain, if possible, some accurate ideas of the most important point in the present controversy. Let them learn the distinction between Trinitarianism and Unitarianism. Many use these words without meaning, and are very zealous about sounds. Some suppose that Trinitarianism consists in believing in the Father, the Son, and the Holy

EXTRACTS FROM REMARKS ON THE REV. DR. WORCESTER'S SECOND  
LETTER TO MR. CHANNING.

*November, 1815.* "As far as I understand the prevalent sentiments among Liberal Christians in this quarter of our country, they appear to me substantially to agree with the views of Dr. Samuel Clarke and the author of *Bible News*; and were we required to select human leaders in religion, I believe that we should range ourselves under their standard in preference to any other.

"Dr. Clarke believed that the FATHER ALONE is the Supreme God, and that Jesus Christ is not the Supreme God, but derived his being and all his power and honors from the Father, even from an act of the Father's power and will. He maintains, that, as the Scriptures have not taught us the manner in which the Son derived his existence from his Father, it is presumptuous to affirm that the Son was created, or that there was a time when he did not exist. On these subjects the word of God has not given us light, and therefore we ought to be silent. The author of *Bible News* in like manner affirms that the Father only is the Supreme God, that Jesus is a distinct being from God, and that he derives everything from his Father. He has some views relating

Spirit. But we all believe in these; we all believe that the *Father* sent the *Son*, and gives, to those that ask, the *Holy Spirit*. We are all Trinitarians, if this belief is Trinitarianism. But it is not. The Trinitarian believes that the one God is *three distinct persons*, called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and he believes that each of these persons is equal to the other two in every perfection, that each is the only true God, and yet that the three are only one God. This is Trinitarianism. The Unitarian believes that there is but one person possessing supreme Divinity, even the Father. This is the great distinction; let it be kept steadily in view. Some Christians have still more vague ideas on this subject. They suppose that Trinitarians think highly of Jesus Christ, whilst Unitarians form low ideas of him, hardly ranking him above common men, and therefore they choose to be Trinitarians. This is a great error. Some Unitarians believe that the Father is so intimately united with Jesus Christ, that it is proper, on account of this union, to ascribe Divine honor and titles to Jesus Christ. Some Unitarians deny that Jesus is a creature, and affirm that he is properly the Son of God, possessing a Divine nature derived from the Father. Some Unitarians, who assert that Jesus is a creature, maintain that he is literally the first-born of the creation, the first production of God, the instrumental cause by whom God created all other beings, and the most exalted being in the universe, with the single exception of the Infinite Father. I am persuaded that under these classes of high Unitarians many Christians ought to be ranked who call themselves Orthodox and Trinitarians. In fact, as the word *Trinity* is sometimes used, we all believe it. It is time that this word was better defined. Christians ought not to be separated by a sound. A doctrine which we are called to believe, as we value our souls and our standing in the church, ought to be stated with a precision which cannot be misunderstood. By the Trinity, I have all along understood the doctrine, that *God is three persons.*"



to the 'proper Sonship' of God, which neither Liberal nor 'Orthodox' Christians generally embrace. But the prevalent sentiments of Liberal Christians seem to me to accord substantially with the systems I have above described. Like Dr. Clarke, the majority of this class feel that the Scriptures have not taught the mode of Christ's derivation. They, therefore, do not call Christ a creature, but leave the subject in the obscurity in which they find it, carrying with them, however, an impression that the Scriptures ascribe to Jesus the character of Son of God in a peculiarly high sense, and in a sense in which it is ascribed to no other being.

"With respect to the ATONEMENT, the great body of Liberal Christians seem to me to accord precisely with the author of Bible News, or rather both agree very much with the profound Butler. Both agree that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercession, obtains forgiveness for sinful men; or that, on account, or in consequence, of what Christ has done and suffered, the punishment of sin is averted from the penitent, and blessings forfeited by sin are bestowed. It is, indeed, very true, that Unitarians say nothing about *infinite* atonement, and they shudder when they hear that the ever-blessed God suffered and died on the cross. They reject these representations, because they find not one passage in Scripture which directly asserts them or gives them support. Not *one* word do we hear from Christ or his apostles of an *infinite* atonement. In not *one* solitary text is the efficacy of Christ's death in obtaining forgiveness ascribed to his being the Supreme God. All this is theology of man's making, and strongly marked with the hand of its author. But the doctrine of the Atonement, taken in the broad sense which I have before stated, is not rejected by Unitarians. On the question, which is often asked, how the death of Christ has this blessed influence, they generally think that the Scriptures have given us little light, and that it is the part of wisdom to accept the kind appointment of God, without constructing theories for which the materials must be chiefly borrowed from our own imagination.

"My motive for making the preceding statement is no other than a desire to contribute whatever may be in my power to the peace of our churches. I have hoped, that, by this representation, some portion of the charity which has been expressed towards Dr. Clarke and the author of Bible News may be extended towards other Unitarians; and that thus the ecclesiastical division which is threatened may be averted. Let it not, however, be imagined, that I or my friends are anxious *on our own account* to extort from the 'Orthodox' an acknowledgment, that possibly we hold the true gospel, and are not 'devoid of Christian faith and virtue.' We regard other Chris-



tians as brethren, but can in no degree recognize them as superiors in the Church of our common Master. We do not dread the censures which they may pass on our honest opinions. We rejoice that we have a higher judge, whose truth it is our labor to learn, obey, and maintain, and whose favor will be distributed by other principles than those which prevail in a prejudiced and short-sighted world. But, whilst we mean not to be suitors to our brethren, we are willing and desirous, by any fair representations, to save them from a course which, as we firmly believe, will be injurious to their own characters, unjust to their fellow-Christians, unfriendly to the diffusion of the gospel, and highly offensive to our benevolent Master. Most happy should I be, if, by any honorable concessions on our part, our churches could be preserved from the shock which threatens them. . . .

"It is intimated that *we* 'dread a development.' We respect many of our opponents, but we *dread* none. Our love of peace, they may be assured, has another origin than fear or selfish views. It is from deep conviction that I have stated once and again, that the differences between Unitarians and Trinitarians lie more in sounds than in ideas; that a barbarous phraseology is the chief wall of partition between these classes of Christians; and that, would Trinitarians tell us what they mean, their system would generally be found little else than a mystical form of the Unitarian doctrine. These two classes of Christians appear to me to concur in receiving the most interesting and practical truths of the gospel. Both believe in one God of infinite perfection; and we must remember that it is this perfection of God, and not his unknown substance, which is the proper object of the Christian's love. Both believe in the great doctrine, that eternal life is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. Both learn from the lips and life of Jesus the same great principles of duty, the same exalted views of human perfection, and the same path to immortality. I could easily extend these points of agreement. And what are the questions which divide them? Why, these: First, Whether the One God be three distinct subsistences,<sup>1</sup> or three persons, or three '*somewhats*'<sup>2</sup> called *persons*, as Dr. Worcester says, for want of a 'better word'; and, secondly, Whether one of these three subsistences, or improperly called persons, formed a personal union with a human soul, so that the Infinite Mind, and a human mind, each possessing its own distinct consciousness, became a *complex person*. Such are the points, or rather phrases, of difference between these Christians. And ought phrases like these

<sup>1</sup> "Wardlaw."

<sup>2</sup> "This word has been used by Trinitarians in writing and conversation."

—of which we find not a trace in the Bible, which cannot be defined by those who employ them, which convey to common minds no more meaning than words of an unknown tongue, and which present to the learned only flitting shadows of thought, instead of clear and steady conceptions — to separate those who are united in the great principles which I have stated? Trinitarians, indeed, are apt to suppose themselves at an immeasurable distance from Unitarians. The reason, I think, is, that they are surrounded with a mist of obscure phraseology. Were this mist dispersed, I believe that they would be surprised at discovering their proximity to the Unitarians, and would learn that they had been wasting their hostility on a band of friends and brothers.”<sup>1</sup>

September, 1816. CHRISTIAN UNION. “The guilt of a *sectarian spirit* is but little understood, or it would not be so often and inconsiderately incurred. To bestow our affections on those who are ranged under the same human leader, or who belong to the same church with ourselves, and to withhold it from others who possess equal if not superior virtue, because they bear a different name, is to prefer a party to the Church of Christ. Still more, to look with an unfriendly, jealous eye on the improvements and graces of other denominations, is one of the most decided acts of hostility to Jesus Christ which his disciples have power to commit; for the virtue towards which they thus cherish and express dislike is the image of Christ, the promotion of which is the highest end of his life, of his death, and of his mediation at the right hand of God.

“I speak not this to the reproach of one class of Christians rather than of another. All have reason for deep humiliation. All have been infected with this accursed leaven of party spirit. Few Christians, it is to be feared, look on the virtues and attainments of other denominations with equal pleasure as on those of their own. Few do entire justice to those who differ from them. It is to be hoped, however, that in this respect a real improvement is spreading through Christendom. The partition walls are beginning to fall. The fires of persecution are going out.

“This union of Christians is the brightest feature, the distinguishing glory of our age. Let it be extended, and our religion will have free course through the earth. A new face will then be given to the world. Hitherto the strength of Christians has been spent in mutual conflict. The force of the kingdom of Christ has

<sup>1</sup> For a yet fuller statement of Mr. Channing's views at this period, the reader is referred to the remarks on “The System of Exclusion and Denunciation in Religion,” Works, Vol. V. pp. 373-391. One Volume Edition, pp. 478-489.

been wasted in civil war. Let Christians of every name and every region feel and respect the holy bond of brotherhood; let their prayers and labors be united for the diffusion, not of sectarian peculiarities, but of that genuine Christianity which all hold in common; let a co-operation as extensive as the Christian world be formed to diffuse it and make it practically efficient.

“Let churches lay down their arms and love one another, and nations will begin to learn war no more. Let Christians of different countries embrace one another as brethren, let them co-operate in schemes of general utility to the Church and to mankind, and they will shudder at the thought of breaking this sacred union. Peace, universal peace, will be then their constant prayer.”

1817. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY. “It was by asserting their right to the free use of the Scriptures, and to private judgment, that the Reformers laid the foundation of that purer state of religion in which we now rejoice. Let these rights never be wrested from us. Let us hold them dearer than all civil immunities. Better have our persons and property than our minds subjected to a despot.

“Is it said, that this jealousy is no longer needed in Protestant countries, that faith and conscience are here left free? We certainly have reason to thank God for the enjoyment of greater religious liberty than was ever possessed before. The fire of persecution is quenched; the Scriptures are in every man’s hand. But still, to read the Scriptures with independent minds requires no little effort. There are still obstructions to the privilege of judging for ourselves. The spirit of popery did not expire among our ancestors with its forms. Human nature and its ruling passions are always the same. The same love of power, the same desire to lead, the same wish to dictate to the consciences of others, which burned in the breasts of the Romish clergy, and built up the Romish hierarchy, still subsist and operate among us. There is still, and always will be, until man is more exalted by Christianity, a conspiracy against the religious as well as the civil rights of men. In Protestant countries there are those who are impatient of contradiction, who wish to impose their views on others, who surround their creeds with similar terrors to those made use of by the Papal church, and doom to destruction all who have the temerity to differ from their opinions. And what is yet more melancholy, in Protestant countries are multitudes who, awed by great names and loud denunciations, want courage to inquire for themselves, fear to doubt what positive men and popular opinion pronounce sacred, take the name of a human leader whom they dread to desert, and adopt as their



standard not so much the Scriptures as the interpretation of confident fellow-beings, who condemn all but themselves and their servile adherents. To this timid spirit we owe the worst corruptions of Christianity in earlier times, and it is this which still obscures the glory of our religion.

“Remember, my friends, that the great doctrine of the Reformation was this, — that Jesus Christ is the only infallible teacher of his church, and that to him, as he speaks in his word, and not to human guides, we are all bound to listen. It is the character of the consistent Protestant, and of the enlightened Christian, that he calls no man master, and bows his faith and conscience to no human tribunal. He is not intimidated by positive assertion, anathemas, and cries of heresy. He goes to no infallible head, whether at Rome, Geneva, or Wittenberg; borrows no creed from Trent or Westminster; takes no name from Luther, Calvin, or Arminius; intrenches himself behind no traditions of forefathers and ancient saints. He, indeed, avails himself of the lights and arguments of good and great men of present and former times. But Jesus is the only *authority* to whom he submits.

“Every church in Christendom has its errors; and perhaps errors which to future ages may seem as gross as many earlier superstitions appear to the present generation. In reading Scripture impartially, we may be compelled to dissent from opinions which are embraced by multitudes with an excess of zeal. In this case our path is plain. Let us be meek, but bold professors of truth. Let us all adhere with firmness to what we deliberately and solemnly believe to be the truth of God. Let us not shrink from its defence because it is persecuted, because it is unpopular, because it may expose us to an evil name. Truth should be dearer to us than reputation. We must remember that it has seldom made its way without exposing its professors to suffering and reproach; and in the reproach of our Master we should be willing to share.

“This right to consult and judge for himself of God’s word is our neighbor’s as well as our own. Whilst we claim it for ourselves, let us not deny it to others. Let us give what we ask. Let us be anxious, not to make men think as we do, but to direct them to the only source of truth; and let us not condemn their motives, if in interpreting the Scriptures they differ from ourselves.

“There is a strong disposition in men to make their own creeds standards for those around them, to cling to the opinions on which they differ from others with peculiar confidence and tenacity; and, as if incapable of error, to look with an evil eye on those who doubt them. But this is a strange inconsistency in a Protestant.



The claim of infallibility was the very article of the Romish church against which Luther most strenuously set his face. He maintained that popes, councils, fathers, and the whole church might err; and who of us that reads the records of the church, who that sees the lamentable and now acknowledged errors, both of the Romish and Protestant communions, will not assent to this doctrine of human frailty? Yet, in opposition to this principle, how many Protestants clothe themselves with that infallibility which they have condemned and derided in Rome, assume this very place of pope in the church, prepare articles of faith for their brethren, and give over to perdition those who will not receive their decrees! To this usurping and uncharitable spirit the miseries of the church in every age are to be traced. It is this which has divided Christians into hostile bands, kindled public wars, and made the page of Christian history as black and bloody as the records of heathenism.

“Strange, that, with all history to instruct us, we do not learn to be humble, candid, and tolerant; that we do not remember that we, and not our brothers, may have erred; and that, even if we are right, it does not become us to pronounce his error a crime.

“The peace of the church has been long enough disturbed. There is but one way to restore it. We must respect each other’s rights, feel our own fallibility, be kind to them that differ from us, and be just to the excellences and sincerity of all denominations. Look where we will into the innumerable divisions of the church, we may everywhere find marks of the spirit of Jesus. The Catholic church, even if it seems to us the most corrupt, can boast of names which do honor to humanity. Let us cease to think that our own sect has engrossed all truth and all goodness. This charity is the ornament of the true Christian, and the only bond which can unite disciples too long divided, the only remedy which can heal the wounded and lacerated body of Christ.”

#### ADDRESS AT THE FORMATION OF THE BERRY-STREET CONFERENCE.

May, 1820. LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY. “The views and dispositions which have led to this meeting may easily be expressed. It was thought by some of us, that the ministers of this Commonwealth who are known to agree in what are called *Liberal and catholic views of Christianity*, needed a bond of union, a means of intercourse, and an opportunity of conference not as yet enjoyed. It was thought that by meeting to join their prayers and counsels, to report the state and prospects of religion in different parts of the Commonwealth, to communicate the methods of advancing it

which have been found most successful, to give warning of dangers not generally apprehended, to seek advice in difficulties, and to take a broad survey of our ecclesiastical affairs, and of the wants of our churches, — much light, strength, comfort, animation, zeal, would be spread through our body. It was thought that, by such a meeting, brotherly love would be advanced, that a foundation would be laid for joint exertion, and that many valuable objects, which now languish through our ignorance of each other, and want of concert, might be prosecuted with vigor and success. It was thought that the circumstances of the times demand a more earnest co-operation than formerly, — that, living, as we do, in an age in which the principle of combination, the power of associated numbers, is resorted to by all sects and parties in an unprecedented degree, we were bound to avail ourselves of this instrumentality, as far as consists with the free, upright, independent spirit of our religion. For these ends it was proposed that an annual meeting should be held, which should be spent in prayer, in hearing an address from one of our number, in offering reports as to the state of our churches, and in conference as to the best methods of advancing religion. . . .

“The Christian religion is in a particular manner committed to the care, watchfulness, protection of ministers; and Christianity, if it be true, must be acknowledged as eminently the cause of God, and the highest interest of human beings. We exaggerate nothing when we speak of all human institutions, — government, science, arts, public wealth, public prosperity, of all the outward, positive goods of life, and even of the progress of intellect and the development of genius, as inferior and comparatively unimportant concerns; for man’s relations to God and to a future life are, after all, the true springs of purity, goodness, greatness, consolation, joy; and it is by making them known in their reality and extent, that *society* is to be advanced and refined, as well as *individuals* redeemed and trained for heaven.

“Let us, then, never forget that the religion which reveals the True God and Immortal Life, which is the best legacy of past ages, and the only hope for the future, is committed to us, to be preserved, extended, perpetuated; and let the dignity of our office — an office before which the splendor of thrones and the highest distinctions of earthly ambition grow dim — be used by us to develop a just elevation of mind, a force of resolution and action, a superiority to temporary applause, a willingness to live and die, to labor and suffer, for the promotion of Christianity. . . .

“The present is not an age of controversy of believers with infi-

dels, but of believers with believers ; and it is not uncommon now to hear the name of Christian denied to those who, in earlier seasons of peril, were thought the most powerful defenders of the faith. It is not, however, the distinguishing peculiarity of our times that Christian fights with Christian, for such contentions make up the burden of ecclesiastical history ; but this seems to me to be the striking distinction of the age, that Christians, instead of being arrayed, as heretofore, under the different standards of little sects, are gradually gathering by large masses and with systematic order into *two* great divisions. These two great divisions are known among us by the names of ORTHODOX and LIBERAL ; and although it is true that other party distinctions remain, yet these are so prominent and comprehensive, that they deserve our peculiar and almost exclusive attention, in considering the special duties which are imposed on us by the times.

“This most important division of the Christian community is traced to different causes by the different parties. The Orthodox maintain that the great cause of it is an arrogant disposition in their opponents to exalt reason at the expense of revelation, to scatter the sacred cloud of mystery which hangs over the deep things of God, to reject the Divine word because it apparently contradicts the conclusions of human understanding. On the other hand, the Liberal or Rational maintain that this division is to be traced to the advancement of the human mind, to the establishment of just principles of Biblical criticism, to the emancipation of Christianity from the corruption of ages of darkness, and that it is not their unwarrantable boldness, but a servile adherence on the part of their opponents to prejudices consecrated by antiquity, which prevents the union of Christians.

“These explanations, though totally opposed to each other, assist us to understand the true nature of the controversy which agitates the community. We may learn from them, that particular doctrines are not the chief walls of separation. The great question is not, whether the trinity, or vicarious punishment, or innate sin, be true. There is a broader question which now divides us, and it is this, — *How far is REASON to be used in explaining REVELATION?*

“The Liberal Christian not only differs from his Orthodox brother on particular points, but differs in his mode of explaining that Book which they both acknowledge to be the umpire. He maintains that the great, essential principles of Christianity, such as God’s unity and paternal character, and the equity and mercy of his administration, are there revealed with noontide brightness, and that they accord perfectly with the discoveries of nature, and the



surest dictates of our moral faculties. Consequently he maintains that passages of Scripture, which, taken separately, might give different ideas of God's nature and government, are, in common candor to the sacred writers, to be construed in consistency with these fundamental truths. He affirms, too, that just as far as we acquaint ourselves with the circumstances under which these passages were written, such a consistent interpretation is seen to be the intention of the authors, and that we are therefore justified in believing that nothing but the antiquity of the sacred writings prevents us from making the same discovery in relation to other passages which continue to be obscure.

“The Orthodox Christian discards as impious this exercise of reason, though he himself not seldom is compelled to resort to it, and maintains that the Scriptures are frittered away by his opponents because they take the liberty, which, when needed, is taken by all, of explaining figuratively certain passages, which, according to their literal import, seem to contradict the general strain of Scripture and the clearest views which God's works and word afford of his wisdom and goodness. Such is the state of the controversy among us. A rational, consistent interpretation of Scripture is contended for by one party, who maintain that before such an interpretation the doctrines of the Trinity, of Infinite Satisfaction, of Election, of Irresistible Grace, and Sudden Conversion, fly as the shades of the night before the sun; whilst the other party maintain that these doctrines are not a whit the less credible because they offend reason and the moral sense, that an important part of faith is the humiliation of the understanding, weakened and perverted as it is by sin, and that mystery is one of the sure and essential marks of Divine revelation.

“The question now presents itself, What duties result from this state of the Church?

“Is this controversy an important one? Is this rational interpretation of the Scriptures for which we plead important? Are the doctrines which seem to us to flow from such interpretation worth contending for? These questions will help us to judge of our duty at the present moment. And in answer to them I would maintain, that the controversy is of great importance, and that we owe to Jesus Christ, our Master, and to his gospel, a strenuous defence of the rational, consistent interpretation which we are seeking to give to his word. The success, perhaps the very existence, of Christianity requires this service at our hands. Christianity cannot flourish, or continue, unless thus interpreted. It is a fact, that, however disordered human affairs seem to be,



society is becoming more enlightened ; and there is a growing demand for a form of religion which will agree with the clear dictates of conscience, and the plain manifestations which the universe makes of God. An irrational form of religion cannot support itself against the advances of intelligence. We have seen in Catholic countries a general revolting of enlightened men from Christianity, through disgust at Popery, the only form under which it was presented to their view. Let an irrational Protestantism be exclusively propagated, so that the intelligent will be called to make their election between this and infidelity, and the result can hardly be doubted. The progressive influence of Christianity depends mainly on the fact, that it is a rational religion ; by which I mean, not that it is such a system as reason could discover without revelation, and still less that it is a cold and lifeless scheme of philosophical doctrines, but that it is a religion which agrees with itself, with our moral nature, with our experience and observation, with the order of the universe, and the manifest attributes of God. . . . .

“ I have time to add but one more reason for earnestly and firmly defending and spreading what we deem the consistent, rational, and just interpretation of Christianity ; and it is this, that the cause of *Practical Religion*, of evangelical piety and morals, is deeply concerned in this movement. On this point a more particular discussion is needed than the present limits allow, because increasing pains are taken to represent our views as unfriendly to vital religion, and to connect with opposite doctrines the ideas of devoted zeal and seriousness. This fact is particularly interesting to *us*, for our great work as Christian ministers is to promote *Practical Christianity*, love to God and love to man ; and our peculiarities are suspicious indeed, if they are in any manner unfavorable to this supreme end of our office.

“ But the reproach is groundless. On the contrary, the chief motive, I conceive, for insisting on and spreading rational views is, that they are manifestly more suited than so-called Orthodox views to reconcile men’s hearts to God, to purify and exalt human nature, to advance charity and philanthropy, and all the peculiar virtues of the gospel. Did I not believe this, I should say, let us at once lay down the weapons of controversy ; for even if we hold the truth, it is not worth contending for, it ought not to be contended for, at the hazard of the peace of the community, if it is only a theorem for the speculative intellect, an abstract science, without power to operate on the character, inapplicable to the conscience and life. Again I say, it is the *practical influence* of Liberal views, it is the

baneful tendency of Orthodox views, which summons us to the zealous advocacy of rational and consistent Christianity."

1820. CONGREGATIONALISM. "Our fathers maintained the independence of Christian churches. This was their fundamental principle. They taught that every church or congregation of Christians is an independent community, — that it is competent to its own government, has the sole power of managing its own concerns, electing its own ministers, and deciding its own controversies, and that it is not subject to any other churches, or to bishops, or synods, or assemblies, or to any foreign ecclesiastical tribunal whatever. This great principle seemed to our fathers not only true, but infinitely important. . . .

"The question now offers itself, Were our fathers justifiable in adopting and asserting this principle? And one answer immediately suggests itself. In the Scriptures we find not one word of a national church, not an intimation that all the churches of the same country should link themselves together, should give up their independence and self-control, and subject themselves to a common master and a few prelates. In Scripture we find but two uses of the word church, when applied to religious concerns. It sometimes means the whole body of Christians spread over the earth, and sometimes a particular congregation of Christians accustomed to meet in one place. That such congregations are to submit themselves to one common head or pope, as the Catholics teach, or to a national head, as the English church teaches, or to any power or tribunal distinct from that which subsists in each, is nowhere even hinted in the Scriptures. Such connections are human arrangements, and can be defended only by arguments drawn from their necessity, or their obvious fitness to promote the ends of the Christian religion.

"But can such a defence be sustained? What benefits, I pray you, are to be expected from uniting particular churches into a mass, a body, under one government? To answer these questions, consider the purposes for which churches are instituted, — and they may be expressed in a short compass. Churches are instituted that Christians may grow in knowledge, piety, and charity, by meeting together as Christians, by joining in worship, by communing together in Christ's ordinances, by receiving instruction from a public teacher, and uniting in good works. The association is a friendly one, intended to promote holiness, truth, and universal virtue, by persuasion, example, and intercourse. Now, I ask, how are these objects advanced by combining many churches under one

government? Will a church be more strongly united in love, will it worship more fervently, or make surer progress in truth, if its minister be appointed, its worship regulated, its creed established, by a foreign power, be that power a pope, or a king, or an assembly of bishops, or an assembly of elders? One would think that every church could better consult its own edification—and this is its great object—than strangers.

“There should undoubtedly be a close union between different churches, but a *union of charity*, and not a consolidation into one mass, or a subjection to one tribunal. This last mode of binding churches together is uncongenial with the free and equal spirit of Christianity, engenders ambition, intrigue, and jealousy, subjects Christ’s Church to civil or ecclesiastical bondage, substitutes force for persuasion, and stifles the spirit of inquiry. These are almost inevitable effects. Once create a power or jurisdiction over all the churches of a country, or over a large number, and you create a prize for ambition. This power becomes important to the magistrate, it excites the craving of the clergy. They who gain it will not fail to strengthen and extend it; free inquiry will be its prey; and the cardinal virtues of the gospel—humility, meekness, and charity—will be trodden under its feet. . . .

“Congregationalism is the only effectual protection of the Church from usurpation, the only effectual security of Christian freedom, of the right of private judgment. As such let us hold it dear. Let us esteem it an invaluable legacy. Let us resist every effort to wrest it from us. Attempts have been made, and may be repeated, to subject our churches to tribunals subversive of their independence. Let the voice of our fathers be heard, warning us to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free. The independence of our churches was the fundamental principle which they aimed to establish here, and here may it never die.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reader, who would trace the gradual development of Mr. Channing’s principles, should read, in connection with this address, the tracts on “Objections to Unitarian Christianity Considered,” 1819, Works, Vol. V. pp. 393-410, One Volume Edition, pp. 401-408; “The Moral Argument against Calvinism,” 1820, Works, Vol. I. pp. 217-241, One Volume Edition, pp. 459-468; and chiefly the “Discourse at the Ordination of the Rev. Jared Sparks, Baltimore,” 1819, Works, Vol. III. pp. 59-103, One Volume Edition, pp. 367-384.

## CHAPTER IV. — SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

ÆT. 34-42. 1814-1822.

CONTROVERSY was utterly uncongenial to Mr. Channing ; his temper, tastes, desires, habits, all conspired to make it repugnant. He was discriminating in processes of thought, instinctively repelled dogmas, however time-hallowed, which were abhorrent to the dictates of his moral nature, made nice distinctions between opinions resulting from accidental influences and truths addressed to the reason of man universally in the creeds transmitted by tradition, and was earnestly watching for a brighter spiritual day to dawn ; but, while thus impelled to join the ranks of the progress-party, and fitted by eloquence to be a leader there, he yet appreciated so justly what was good in the tendencies of established bodies of believers, and so cordially sympathized with the character displayed by Christians of every denomination, that he felt he was doing violence to his heart by withdrawing from their communion. Above all, he was so conscious of the darkness, ignorance, sophistry, overspreading the theological world, and so fervently longing for some full vision of Divine Wisdom, that a position of sectarian dogmatism seemed to him as absurd as it was presumptuous. He was chiefly desirous to forget the things behind and to press on. It would be treating him with great injustice, then, not to present some more positive traces of his spiritual growth during these years of painful dissension. How very small a space controversy occupied in his mind is proved by the fact, that, among his unpublished sermons and manuscripts of that period, there does not remain a *single controversial paper*. He was seeking to reverence and love God, to respect and sympathize with man, to form himself and his fellows anew in Christ's image, to mould society upon the pattern of Divine justice. This will appear in the following extracts.

## SECTION FIRST.

## RELIGION.

October, 1814. DIVINE GOODNESS AND JUSTICE ONE. "I would have you penetrated with the conviction that God is most just ; but I would have you hold this truth in consistency with that most interesting of all truths, that God delights to do good, and that all his operations are directed by benevolence. Benevolence and justice are harmonious attributes of God, to which all others may be reduced ; and the true idea of justice is, that it is a branch or mode of exercise of benevolence.



“This thought is so important, especially as giving us the clearest view of the justice of God, that I shall proceed to offer a few remarks in illustration of it. There is reason to fear that this attribute has not always been placed in its true light. Some persons, misled by confining their attention to a few passages of Scripture, have represented justice as a distinct perfection from goodness, and as sometimes clashing with it, and opposing the wishes of Divine benevolence. Such sentiments are dishonorable to God, and injurious to true piety, by stripping his character of its chief excellence, the *infinity* of goodness. Such representations of justice have induced some to regard it as an attribute to be dreaded rather than to be esteemed and loved; and many have wished to exclude it from their conception of God. But an attention to the general scope of Scripture will correct the error, and teach us that God’s justice coincides with goodness, and is even a branch of it, and that it is therefore to be regarded with affectionate reverence. . . .

“Divine justice is, in fact, an exercise of enlarged benevolence, enjoining and enforcing by rewards and punishments those dispositions and actions on which the peace, order, improvement, and felicity of rational beings depend. I repeat it, *the principle of justice is benevolence*. It is God’s goodness which inclines and impels him to maintain a moral government, or to treat beings according to their characters; for nothing has so much influence as character on the happiness or misery of his universe. The more benevolence a being possesses, the more he will honor, reward, and encourage that spirit of universal love which is the very soul of happiness, and the more he will discountenance that selfish and ungrateful spirit which disorders, and darkens, and desolates creation.

“God’s justice, then, is a wise benevolence, employing rewards and punishments to exalt intelligent creatures to the most perfect and happy character, to a participation of that love or moral goodness which forms his own felicity.”

1815. SPIRITUAL INFLUENCES. “There is another class of Christians, who, whilst they believe that God constantly operates on the human mind, and that without his operation no fruits of goodness are produced, yet believe that the mode of his influence is essentially different from that presented in the view just given. They believe that Divine influence is not sudden and irresistible, but suited to the nature of man as a free and accountable being; that it is habitual, gentle, persuasive, offering truth to the mind and motives to the will, but leaving the individual at liberty to comply with or reject it. They conceive that compulsion or irresistible power would entirely destroy the virtue of human actions, would

reduce man to a machine, and would thus entirely defeat God's end, which is to render us objects of approbation and reward. They conceive that our whole goodness is to be ascribed to God as its author, because he gives us all our powers, our understanding, our consciences, our knowledge of duty, our capacity of improvement, because he furnishes in his gospel the most powerful motives to obedience, and because, by the silent influences of his providence and spirit on the heart, he suggests good thoughts, awakens desires of holiness, and furnishes all the strength which we need to resist temptation. But they believe that God's agency stops here, that he does not in any manner compel men to follow the light and the motives which he presents, — does not force them to use the strength which he bestows. It depends on themselves whether they concur with or resist his grace, whether they use well or neglect the powers which he gives, whether they will serve God or disobey him."

1817. WALKING WITH GOD. "It is the earnest desire of the pious man, whose heart has been touched by God's good spirit, to feel what he believes, that God is with him; and his attention is often withdrawn from all finite things, that he may bring home this thought with power to his heart.

"The quickness of perception, the sensibility, to which the mind, by use and time, may attain on these subjects, is not easily believed by those who have made no progress in religion. The pious man, whose mind is exercised on God, comes to see him in a peculiar manner. He has a consciousness of his presence which he cannot easily describe or communicate to one who has lived wholly in the world. In scenes which to others are blank and desolate, he feels that he is not alone; and in society where others see only their fellow-beings, a higher presence is revered and perceived. Even when thinking of outward things, there is, if I may so speak, in the breast of a devout man, a latent sense of God; just as, when we are near or in sight of an individual whom we respect, there is a consciousness of him, and a reference to him, even though we are conversing freely with other beings.

"The pious man finds in the whole of life, in its successes or reverses, in the kindness of friends or the calumnies of foes, in the difficulties and trials of his state, calls and motives to this secret converse with God, and life becomes more and more interesting in proportion as it strengthens this sacred intimacy. Often, when to those around he seems to be living among things seen, and engaged by human agencies, he is holding a high and pure intercourse with the Father of his spirit. And this piety

brings its reward in the serenity and refinement which it imparts to the whole spirit of him who thus walks with God."

1813. THE DIGNITY OF PIETY. "What is there which gives such dignity to our nature as the capacity of knowing and of loving the best of beings? It is chiefly this capacity of religion that lifts us above brutes, that allies us to superior orders of beings. You must at once acknowledge that the mind is ennobled just in proportion to the grandeur and sublimity of the objects on which it is employed. Think, then, of the elevation of that mind which habitually directs itself to God, of that heart in which this infinitely great and good being is enthroned. We ought to consider piety as the highest, most generous, and dignified attainment which is placed within our reach, — in fact, as the noblest characteristic which an intelligent creature can exhibit.

"It is melancholy that piety should not be associated in every mind with the idea of dignity and honor. But, unhappily, religion has been so often worn as a mask by the unprincipled, it has so often been accompanied by mummary and superstition, that some have associated with its venerable name feelings of contempt and degradation. They think that to be devout is to be weak. Of all delusions there is none greater than this.

"We should feel that piety is the very spirit of heaven, the very life of angels, a pure celestial flame, ever tending to that world from which it descended, and aspiring towards Him by whom it is enkindled. We should feel that piety partakes the glory of God, who is its object, and assimilates us to him; that it gives warmth to benevolence, strength to fortitude, firmness to integrity, and calmness and peace to afflicted virtue. These are the venerable and attractive attributes in which piety should be arrayed."

1816. RESEMBLANCE TO GOD. "There is something most affecting in the thought of resembling God. It is a reflection which ought to fill and almost overwhelm our minds, that we have a nature capable of bearing the image of God's perfections. This single view of our nature throws round it a lustre infinitely surpassing all the honors of the world; and this thought of resembling God is not a presumptuous one. The purity, the virtue, to which we are called in the gospel, and which men have in a measure attained, is *the same in nature* with that which constitutes the glory of God. In particular, that disinterested love, that diffusive benevolence, to which Jesus Christ so emphatically calls us, forms the highest glory of the Divine character. The language of John on this subject is remarkable. 'God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God.' Astonishing thought! By Christian good-



ness we are made partakers of God's nature, we shine with a ray of his light, we share his highest perfection, we become temples of the Divinity, God dwells in us. This grand reality is too faintly felt by us. We do not with sufficient force conceive the intimate relation which we may sustain to God. We do not heartily believe that Christian virtue constitutes us his children, by making us like him. We do not bring it home to ourselves, that in sinning we are extinguishing a ray of Divinity within our souls, and that by every step in moral progress we are ascending towards God, the Original and End of all excellence and felicity."

1818. TRUE PIETY ONE WITH ACTIVE GOODNESS. "Religion is a high degré of delight in all the perfections of God, — in his wisdom, his rectitude, his benevolence; and what is the most acceptable expression of this veneration? Is it enough to admire and praise? Do we not most efficiently manifest our esteem by seeking to become what we praise, by transcribing into our lives the perfections of God, by copying his wisdom in the judicious pursuit of good ends, his justice in the discharge of all our obligations, and his benevolence in the diffusion of all possible happiness around us? Then is our love of God the most exalted, when in our several spheres we aim to be like him, to reflect his glory, to act for the great end for which he is ever active, the improvement and happiness of every being within our influence.

"I wish you to feel that religion, love to God, is in no way at war with our relations and present state. It does not take us out of the world. It is not inconsistent with any of the useful pursuits of life, but unites them with itself, and makes them oblations to God. He who feels the true influence of religion does not relinquish his labor. On the contrary, he becomes more industrious, labors with more cheerfulness, is more contented with his lot, however difficult. Religion furnishes motives which give to existence a dignity and animation such as he was unconscious of before. Neither does he forsake society. On the contrary, his social character is improved. Taught by God's goodness, he looks round on his fellow-beings with new tenderness. A more benignant smile lights up his countenance at sight of human virtue and happiness, a more frequent pain is felt at sight of human guilt and misery. He is more conscientious, more just in his transactions, more faithful in all his relations, milder in his temper, and more active in his charity. Neither does he give up all his enjoyments. His religion cuts off no innocent and healthy stream of pleasure. It heightens pleasure, by making it more rational, more pure, more



equable, more consistent with all the duties of life. This, my friends, is the nature and influence of true religion.

“In one word, religion is designed to refine and improve our whole nature, to make us better in every condition, to awaken all our faculties, to render us active, intelligent, generous, pure, temperate, meek, contented, and serene. And it is genuine just so far, and no farther, as these effects are produced. This influence of religion over the whole life is the proper standard by which it should be measured.”

1819. PIETY AND MORALITY. “What is it in God which calls forth our veneration, gratitude, love, filial attachment? What attribute gives him a claim to these sentiments? On this point there is little difference of opinion. All Christians will tell you that God is chiefly to be loved and revered because he is good or benevolent, and because he is righteous or just, — because he desires at once the happiness and the excellence of his creatures, — because he rejoices to send benefits on all who are fitted to receive them, — because he enjoins and rewards virtue, and abhors and punishes impenitent guilt. Benevolence and righteousness, then, are the attributes on which *Piety* chiefly rests as its object, and by communion with which it acts and grows.

“But consider a moment what benevolence and righteousness are. Are they not the very qualities which we mean by *Morality*? What is morality but the exercise of a benevolent and just temper towards all beings within our knowledge and influence? If so, what is God’s character, the character which we are to love, but perfect morality? — what but the very dispositions, in their fulness, which conscience enjoins upon every man, and which form what we call rectitude? To love God, then, is to love morality in its most perfect form; and thus we see how religion and morals pass into each other and become one.

“This idea seems to me too important to be passed over lightly. Men have always sunk a great gulf between piety and morality, religion and rectitude, devoutness and virtue. To love God has been thought something quite distinct from loving our neighbor, loving our duty, loving right and worthy actions. But they are not to be divided! To love God is the same thing as to love rectitude, for God is rectitude; this is the central principle of his character. His character is the perfection of morality, and the love of him is the love of morality. The love of God is but another name for the love of essential benevolence and justice; — it is a sincere and obedient delight in a Divine government, by which these virtues are

manifested, enforced, spread abroad, and renewed most gloriously. So inseparable are religion and morality. If we could conceive of God as wanting the qualities and attributes which in men we call moral virtues, we should thereby tear up and destroy the vital germ of piety. Nothing would remain for our love, veneration, and filial attachment to cling to in God. He would have no claim on us. It is because he is The Good, because he is a moral being, and because in loving him we love Perfect Morality, that we are bound to love him with all the heart, soul, and strength.

“According to these views, the genuineness and strength of our religion appear altogether in our love of righteousness and goodness, and in our endeavor to approach God in these moral perfections. I know religion is generally represented as something different from this. The labor of men has always been to divorce piety from virtue, — to substitute adulation for moral obedience, acts of homage to God for equity and benevolence to men. Heathenism was little more than an attempt to conciliate the Divine favor by outward rites, to please God by other means than a pure and good life. We cannot wonder that men fly to these false modes of religion, for the obligations they impose are light and easy, when compared with those of rectitude. It is vastly easier to flatter the Supreme Being than to subdue ourselves. Nothing is so hard as to root out bad passions, to be upright, at whatever cost, and to be benevolent and charitable under all provocations and difficulties. To seek a resemblance of God’s moral purity is unspeakably more toilsome than to praise him with transport. . . .

“The happiest influence of religion appears, not in giving us occasional joys and raptures, but in communicating delicacy and power to our sense of duty, in strengthening conscience to resist all created things when they oppose its convictions, in exalting our ordinary life, in making our control of the passions complete, our charity superior to all sacrifice and suffering, and our uprightness immovable as the throne of God. The happiest influence of religion appears, not in raising us to something higher than morality, for that would be to raise us above God himself, but in giving us sublime ideas of morality, a pure will and high aim, a purpose of excellence such as never could exist without a knowledge of God’s character, and a hope of his aid in imitating his goodness. Religion makes us moral by renewing our characters and lives in the image of Divine virtue. It forms us to a rectitude, and benevolence, and purity, of a higher order than worldly men can conceive. In this its glory and strength are made manifest. Religion is the perfection of morality.”

1816. THE HAPPINESS OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE. "The human heart not only needs objects of affection, but it demands an object vast, infinite as God, completely to fill and to satisfy it. The soul of man, though often debased and contracted, often discovers to us a remarkable property, perhaps the most remarkable in its constitution, — a certain insatiableness of desire, a love of great objects, a discontent with what is narrow and limited, a thirst for something better than it finds on earth. This principle has sometimes been called the love of the infinite, and though often suppressed by want, and oftener by vice, it is ineradicable in human nature, and shows to us that the human mind can find repose only in the Infinite Being. God is the only fit end and object for such a being as man. The world cannot fill his mind. You see him discontented, restless, even amidst its fairest prospects. A secret uneasiness preys on him, which he can neither analyze nor describe. The truth is, his soul, whilst confined to the world, has not yet found its true element. He has desires and affections to which nothing here is proportioned.

"Whilst earthly objects are exhausted by familiarity, the thought of God becomes to the devout man continually brighter, richer, vaster, derives fresh lustre from all that he observes of nature and providence, and attracts to itself all the glories of the universe. The devout man, especially in moments of strong religious sensibility, feels distinctly that he has found the true happiness of man. He has found a Being for his veneration and love, whose character is inexhaustible; who, after ages shall have passed, will still be uncomprehended in the extent of his perfections, and will still communicate to the pure mind stronger proofs of his excellence and more intimate signs of his approval."

1816. HEAVEN. "Descriptions of this nature too often convey the impression that heaven is a state of rapturous ecstasy, suspending reason and the calm exercise of understanding. It is, indeed, true, that the Scriptures teach us that in the future life the affections will be powerfully excited. New sensibility will be communicated to the heart. God will be loved with a vastly purer and intenser love than is known on earth. But still the understanding will not be sacrificed to the feelings. Devotion will be calm, deliberate, reasonable. It will be the fruit of extended knowledge. All the faculties of the understanding will be exerted and invigorated, as well as the affections; and the happiness of heaven will possess that serene and reflecting character which it is becoming and honorable for rational beings to enjoy.



“Another representation of heaven, which seems to me unfavorable to a strong impression of its happiness, is this : — Heaven is often described as a place where eternity will be spent in immediate acts of Divine worship. This error arises from a too literal and narrow interpretation of passages in Scripture. Their true meaning is, that at all times, and in all places, spirits in heaven will possess that sensibility to God which places of worship are particularly designed to promote. Whatever region of this vast universe they may visit, they will regard it as God’s empire, God’s temple ; his presence will be felt, his perfections be traced and adored, his will be cheerfully obeyed. This spirit of devotion, which we ought to cherish on earth, will, indeed, be the habit of heaven ; but its exercise will be consistent with the greatest variety of scenes and employments, and very unlike that wearisome monotony of an endless round of religious services which some seem to anticipate.

“I proceed to consider another view of heaven which renders it uninteresting. Heaven is sometimes described in a manner which excludes the idea of improvement, of progression. The thought of a stationary existence, of remaining the same through eternity, of a world where the mind, as it looks forward to endless ages, will see no change, no progressive ascent to superior virtue, is a most discouraging and melancholy one. The human mind seems so impatient of limits, it so delights in boundless prospects, that we can hardly feel as if it would be happy, even in heaven itself, were it to find that it had reached its goal ; that no accessions were to be made to its knowledge and goodness ; that no nearer approach could be gained to God and superior orders of being ; that all above it was forbidden ground, an inaccessible felicity.

“Such conceptions of heaven are altogether inconsistent with what we know of the faculties of the human understanding, which seem capable of indefinite progression, and with what we see of the works of God, which teach us that he delights in a progressive creation. We ought rather to conceive of heaven as a state which will offer far greater means of improvement than the present, which will open new fields for thought, new worlds for research, which will inspire a more intense desire of moral greatness, and give continually increasing energy and splendor to all the virtues which ennoble our nature. . . .

“Another error in the description of heaven, which I think renders it less interesting, is that the thought of society is thrown too much out of sight. Now, human nature is essentially social. It wants objects of affection, companions to whom it may communicate its thoughts and purposes, and with whom it may act and



enjoy. Pleasure is tasteless without friendly participation, and every view of heaven excluding this is unfavorable to an impression of its happiness. We are too apt to think of heaven as a solemn place. It ought to be viewed by us as a place of cheerful society. The countenances of its inhabitants should seem to us irradiated by a benign smile in their intercourse with one another, and their piety, though reverential, should seem to us a filial and happy sentiment, which enters into the conversation, and which they delight to manifest together.

“Another view of heaven which seems to me to weaken its interest is this:—Its inhabitants are often described as forming a world by themselves, as having no connection with any other beings. Heaven seems to be considered as a region separated from the rest of the universe. Now an improved and benevolent mind can hardly escape the desire of extending its acquaintance with this boundless universe of which it forms a part; and heaven would seem a place of confinement, did it shut up its inhabitants forever from every other region. But we ought not to conceive thus of the future state of good men. We need not doubt the fact, that angels, whose home is heaven, visit our earth and bear a part in our transactions; and we have good reason to believe, that, if we obtain admission into heaven, we shall still have opportunity, not only to return to earth, but to view the operation of God in distant spheres, and be his ministers in other worlds. . . .

“It is not impossible, that, in our intercourse with other worlds, we shall meet with beings who are passing through the first stage of discipline, like that which is now assigned to ourselves, — beings exposed to pain, temptation, and sorrow, beings who may need our sympathy and aid, and to whom we may render the same offices which we have reason to believe angels now render to the human race. It seems to me that we do not render heaven a less interesting or less happy world, when we suppose that its inhabitants retain the tenderest sensibility, and feel for the sufferings which may be endured in other regions of the creation. There is a sympathy which, though in a measure painful, gives a peculiar charm to existence, and which a good man would not wish to resign; and we ought not to believe that this is excluded from heaven.

“Once more: the descriptions which are given of heaven are often, I think, rendered less interesting than they should be, by false ideas which are entertained about the perfection of its inhabitants. It seems to be thought, that, because good men are to be perfect hereafter, they will all resemble each other; and hence that diversity of character, of taste, and habits, which contributes so

much to our happiness, is made to give place to a monotonous and unvaried excellence. But all God's works are marked by variety, and to this they owe much of their interest and beauty.

"Will all this variety be blotted out in heaven? No one, who reflects that this life is a preparatory state, can doubt that our future character will be a continuation of the present, — that, if we enter heaven, we shall carry with us essentially the same minds which we possess on leaving the world, and thus all the peculiarities of earth which are consistent with goodness will be transplanted in the future state. The Scriptures teach us that it will be part of the happiness of heaven to meet there the good and excellent of former times, — the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and other benefactors of mankind. But this happiness would be wholly lost, were men in heaven to lose their peculiar characters, were all to be cast into one mould, were all, in becoming perfect, to become perfectly alike. No, — heaven will not present this unvaried and dull uniformity. The strong lines of character which marked men on earth, we may suppose, will distinguish them hereafter. Paul will retain his ardor, John his kindness, Isaiah his imagination. In heaven we shall witness every form of intellectual and moral excellence. Some of its inhabitants will exhibit to us the milder, and others the sublimer virtues. Some will be distinguished by glow of feeling, some by profoundness of thought, some by activity and energy of will. There will be, too, different degrees of the same excellence, and different employments corresponding to the character.

"The true view of heaven, that which the Scriptures give, that which reason sanctions, and that which we can most powerfully realize, is, that it will not essentially change, but rather improve our nature. We shall be the same beings as on earth; we shall retain our present faculties, our present affections, our love of knowledge, love of beauty, love of action, love of approbation, our sympathy, gratitude, and pleasure in success. We shall probably, too, have bodies not very different from what we now have, — the eye to behold creation and receive its beauties, the ear to hear the voice of friendship and to receive the pleasures of harmony, and even sense refined and purified. This we know, that Jesus in a form like ours ascended into heaven, and when Moses and Elijah conversed with him on the Mount, they appeared in the human form, differing from ours only in its splendor; and from these facts it would seem that our future bodies will bear a general resemblance to the present."

1817. HEAVEN A PLACE FOR GROWTH AND ACTION. "In heaven the understanding will be called into vigorous exercise, and will be

continually enlarged and improved by exertion. Some persons seem to conceive that the mind will at once attain its full and perfect growth in the future world, that it will ascend immediately from this region of darkness and error into the brightest light of heaven, that it will expand at once to the full extent of its capacities, that everything which is to be known will at once be acquired, and therefore that new acquisitions will not be proposed, and will not of course awaken its activity. But this is an imagination altogether unauthorized by Scripture, and it differs so entirely from present experience, that nothing but positive declarations of Scripture can give it a claim to belief. In this life, progression is the universal law. Nothing is brought into being in its most perfect state. Everything rises to maturity from feeble beginnings.

“The all-wise Creator delights in a progressive system, in gradual improvement, not in immediate perfection. It is his uniform method to conduct beings through various stages, not to fix them at once in an unchangeable condition. Now, such being the method of Providence, and such the nature and experience of man, is it not natural to expect that in a future life our nature will be progressive, that the knowledge with which the Christian will commence his future being will be a point from which he will start, a foundation on which he will build, rather than a state in which he will eternally rest?

“Freed from all the passions and prejudices which now darken and disorder his mind, loving the truth with increasing ardor, clothed with a spiritual, vigorous, refined, immortal body, released from all pain, disease, languor, and relaxing toil, and, above all, associated with enlightened and benevolent minds, with angels of light, with apostles, prophets, sages, with Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God, — blest with all these aids and guides, with what rapid steps must the Christian advance in the knowledge of God and of his works! And when we consider that this progression will be eternal, will never end, what an astonishing conception is given us of the future greatness of man! We cannot follow him on his path of glory. To an ever-progressing being no limits can be prescribed. There is no rank of created existence to which he will not ascend. Where seraphs now worship, there man will one day worship, and the purest praises which heaven now hears will ascend from once human lips. Are there orders of beings whose expansive minds embrace the interests of worlds as easily as we do the concerns of our business and families? The mind of man, continually improving, will enjoy the same expansion. I am lost when I at-



tempt to represent to myself human nature perfected in heaven, and through endless ages approaching its wise and holy Creator."

1816. THE FUTURE GLORIES OF THE GOOD. "It is a very interesting view of death, that, instead of destroying, it sets a seal on the virtues of good men, the seal of eternity. It places them beyond danger. It takes them from a region of moral infection, where they sometimes drooped, where temptation triumphs over the most experienced in piety, where the purest excellence can hardly be viewed without feelings of solicitude.

"When we think of the good and holy who have left us, we should banish from our thoughts all gloomy images which death presents. They should rise before our minds, improved, perfected, clothed with a new lustre of goodness. We should think of them as ascended to a purer region. The countenance on which we were accustomed to see the expression of all kind affections should shine upon us brightened with a more benignant smile. Their piety should appear as raised, refined, and kindled into purer ardor by its near approach to God. We should see them surrounded with better friends and examples than those they have left, and in the midst of the purest and happiest society.

"That in this wide creation there are spheres of nobler action than are enjoyed on earth, that there are wider fields for the powers of intelligent beings, and more generous and glorious objects for benevolence, who can doubt? This world, it is not unlikely, is the abode of the feeblest and most imperfect members of God's family. It is, perhaps, the sphere of the humblest labor. Nowhere, perhaps, do intelligent beings enjoy, expand, so little. Go where we will in creation, if we except the abode of the condemned, probably we shall find more improved intelligence, and wider spheres of usefulness. Our present experience teaches us that God delights in an active creation. We see all nature in motion. We see that he delights in accomplishing his most important ends by the agency of his rational creatures, and that thus their concurrence with the creation forms at once their happiness and dignity. Who can doubt that this same principle regulates the whole universe which God has made, that everywhere his purposes are committed to the charge of creatures, that all spaces and ages are one vast field of exertion? Among the chief wonders and glories which the future world is to disclose to us will be the enlarged powers, relations, and influences of virtuous beings.

"Let us not, then, imagine that the usefulness of the good is finished at death. Then rather does it begin. Let us not judge of



their state by associations drawn from the chillness and silence of the grave. They have gone to abodes of life, of warmth, of action. They have gone to fill a larger place in the system of God. Death has expanded their powers. The clogs and fetters of the perishable body have fallen off, that they may act more freely and with more delight in the grand system of creation. We should represent them to our minds as ascended to a higher rank of existence, and admitted to co-operate with far higher communities. This earth was only their school, their place of education, where we saw their powers comparatively in an infant state. They have now reached a maturer age, and are gone to sustain more important relations. They have been called because their agency was needed in higher services than those of this world. Where they are now acting, it is not given to us to know; but the all-wise Father can never be without a sphere for the virtues of his children. It would be grateful to believe that their influence reaches to the present state, and we certainly are not forbidden to indulge the hope. But wherever they may be, they are more useful, more honorably occupied, than when on earth; and by following their steps, we may, however separated from them during life, hope to obtain admission into the same bright regions where they are pressing onward to perfection."

## SECTION SECOND

### HUMAN NATURE.

1815. **GENEROUS VIEWS OF MAN.** "We need to feel more deeply that we are intrusted with a religion which is designed to ennoble human nature, which recognizes in man the capacities of all that is good, great, and excellent, and which offers every encouragement and aid to the pursuit of perfection. The Christian minister, in preparing his discourses, should often recollect, that man, degraded as he frequently appears, has yet powers and faculties which may be refined into angelic perfection, that he is invited to prepare for the community of angels, that he is formed for endless progress in intellectual and moral excellence and felicity. He should often recollect, that in Jesus Christ our nature has been intimately united with the Divine, and that in Jesus humanity is already enthroned in heaven. Familiarized to these generous conceptions, it should often be his object in preaching to unfold to men their capacities of greatness, to reveal the splendor of that destiny to which they are called by Jesus Christ, to awaken aspirations after a nobler character and a higher existence, and to inflame them with the love of all

the graces and virtues with which Jesus came to enrich and adorn human nature. In this way he will prove that he understands the true and great design of the gospel and the ministry, which is the perfection of man's character. . . .

"May I be permitted to say, that perhaps the greatest defect in the ministry, as at present conducted, is, that it is not sufficiently directed to ennoble and elevate the minds of men. It does not breathe a sufficiently generous spirit. It does not appeal sufficiently to the highest and best principles of the human heart, nor delineate with sufficient frequency and energy those lofty sentiments and deeds to which something congenial responds in almost every breast. It appeals too constantly to the lowest principle of man's nature, — I mean the principle of fear, which, under judicious excitement, is indeed of undoubted use, but which, as every parent knows, when habitually awakened, is always found to depress and debase the mind, to break the spirit, to give a tameness to the character, and to chill the best affections. Perhaps one cause of the limited influence of Christianity is, that, as Christianity is too often exhibited, it seems adapted to form an abject, servile character, rather than to raise its disciples to true greatness and dignity. Perhaps, were Christianity more habitually regarded as a system whose chief design is to infuse honorable sentiments, an ingenuous love of God, a superiority to unworthy pursuits, a virtue akin to that of heaven, its reception would be more cordial, and its influence more extensive, more happy, more accordant with its great end, — the perfection of human nature."

1816. MAN'S CAPACITIES OF GOODNESS. "One of the great characteristics of the present day is a lowness, a sordidness, a frigidness of thought and feeling. Men think meanly of their nature, and hence their conduct is selfish and earthly. We do not, indeed, see men in general given up to gross vices. We do not meet around us the ferocity or beastly licentiousness of the savage state. We find many marks of improvement, when we compare the present with earlier ages. But there is little elevation of sentiment. Comparatively few seem to be conscious of their high original, their capacities of excellence, their relation to God, their interest in eternity.

"Blessed be God, in the history of every age and nation — amidst the ravages of ambition and the mean aims of selfishness — there have broken forth nobler sentiments, and the evidences of a heavenly virtue. Every age has been illustrated by men who bore themselves like men, and vindicated the cause of human nature, —

men who, in circumstances of great trial, have adhered to moral and religious principle, to the cause of persecuted truth, to the interests of humanity, to the hope of immortality, — who have trodden under foot the fairest gifts of fortune and the world in the pursuit of duty. It has often pleased God to gather round these men the clouds of adversity, that their virtues might shine with a sublimer splendor. This is the greatest value of history, that it introduces us to persons of this illustrious order; and its noblest use is by their examples to nourish in us a conviction, that elevated purity of motive and conduct is not a dream of fancy, but that it is placed within our reach, and is the very end of being.

“I have spoken of history as refuting the low conceptions which men form of their nature; but, without looking back to former ages, may not every individual, amidst the corruptions of present society, discover in his own sphere some delightful examples and illustrations of human goodness? Does he not discern some whose names are never to be inscribed on the rolls of earthly fame, and who can boast no distinction of intelligence or station, but whose sincere devotedness to God, whose gratitude in adversity, whose patience under injury, whose cheerful discharge of humble duties, whose unwearied zeal in doing good, afford a delightful proof of the connection between the human and angelic nature? Let none, then, say that the corruptions of society forbid us to believe that our nature is susceptible of high advancement. The road to perfection is not unexplored. We have forerunners in this path. We see the traces of many steps directed to immortality. Men of like passions with ourselves have subdued temptation. The good and great were not miracles in the moral world. We possess the same power, the same motives, the same heavenly guide, and the same promise of Divine assistance. . . .

“He who never looks up to an excellence higher than he has attained, who never regards himself as formed for pure and generous sentiments, who never admits the thought that exalted goodness is placed within his reach, will never put forth his powers in pursuit of virtue. He will never rise. He dooms himself to his present state. Exertion supposes that good may be attained, and vigorous exertion supposes that the mind is kindled by the prospect of great attainments. What can you expect from him who sees nothing in the future better than the past? On the other hand, a belief in the capacities and dignity of humanity, a belief of its future glory, a belief that higher excellence is the very end for which we were made, is a spring of generous and unwearied activity. This faith, when deeply fixed in the mind, is a pledge and earnest of the



improvement to which it aspires. It awakens new power in the soul. It gives a natural dignity to the thoughts and actions, and produces an almost involuntary abstinence from all that is false and selfish.

“He who accustoms himself to reflect on Jesus Christ, on his apostles, on martyrs, on the best of men, on the loveliest and sublimest forms of humanity, who regards these high beings as his forerunners in the path of glory, and whose chief prayer is, that he may walk in their steps, — this man has learned the true secret of greatness. Though on earth, he has taken his place in a higher world. Blessed be God, these consoling and encouraging views are not only authorized by the gospel, but Jesus Christ came for this very end, to fix them in our minds, to make them the rule of our lives. His great object was to exalt us to true glory. His example was placed before us, not to create a transient emotion, but to show us to what height our nature may be raised.”

1818. FORCE OF MORAL PURPOSE. “The Christian is known by the energy with which he wills to do right. It is his distinction, that his sense of religious duty, his moral principles, his purposes of virtue, predominate within him. He does not merely love what is good, but chooses it with power.

“We hear often of greatness of character. The only true greatness consists in unconquerable purpose of obedience to God. It consists in adhering with energy and courage to truth, duty, and honor. It consists in taking our rules of action from our own minds, enlightened by revelation, and following our deliberate convictions of right in the face of death and danger. It consists in asking ourselves, first, not what is expedient or safe, but what is generous, excellent, and acceptable to God; and in forming purposes of rectitude with a force which man and time and suffering cannot subdue. This holy energy of mind is the only true greatness, and it is a greatness not beyond the reach of our nature. . . .

“The truly interesting portions of history are those which attest the moral power of man, which show us fellow-beings sustained by inward principle and confidence in God under the heaviest pressure of pain, which show us the mind unchanged in prosperity and adversity, passing unmoved through honor and disgrace, clinging to excellence when her only earthly dowry was death. Would we see our nature in its greatness, we must see it forsaken by all outward aids, compassed with obstacles, yet steadfast, gathering power from difficulty, and opposing a firmer front in proportion to the violence with which its principles are assailed.



“The true use of the trials and temptations of life, and of the turbulent passions in our own breasts, is to call forth spiritual energy and heroic purposes. God might have placed us in a world where duty and pleasure would have mingled and formed one current; but where would have been the discipline of virtue in such a world? Under such a constitution of things, our nature would have been free from sin; but whilst every stain would have been prevented, almost every bright trace of moral glory would have been dim. The crown would have fallen from the head of goodness. We are otherwise circumstanced; — we are placed now in a region of storms, perils, hardships; now in one of blandishments, seductions, snares. In such a world, would we be virtuous and make progress in religion, we must put forth our powers to choose the good and to love it entirely. The conscience must act with vigor. Excellence must be pursued earnestly. An inert purpose will avail us nothing. Our whole nature must be awake. Who does not see that such a world is fitted to form a higher order of minds than a state removed from temptation? True, we must toil, but the harvest is rich. We must fight, but the strength we gain by conflict is an inestimable compensation. Here we have one explanation of our present state. We are tried as by fire, that we may come forth purer from the furnace. Our virtues are in peril, that we may hold them with a firmer grasp. This is the world for the formation of generous and resolute spirits. Let its purpose be in us fully accomplished. . . .

“This force of principle gives, as it were, new power to the whole man. With this inward spring how much can we accomplish, how much endure! Sustained by a consciousness of rectitude, difficulties no longer daunt us, and hindrances sink before us. The minds of men are exceedingly weakened by inconsistent passions, by fear, interest, regard to opinion. They effect little, because they want *unity*. He who is accustomed to ask what is right, and to espouse it with energy, leaving the consequences with God, derives new power from his singleness of purpose. It gives him fearlessness of mind. His faculties, concentrated on his duties, act freely and strenuously; he perseveres where others would droop, and succeeds where they would fail. Right action, by being in itself simple and harmonious, brings an immediate reward in peace, equanimity, steadiness. Strong moral principle is a spring of honorable impulse, and gives us the highest use of all our faculties. . . .

“Force of moral purpose makes us happy. Happiness does not consist, as men are too apt to imagine, in passive enjoyments. It

is found in the strenuous use of our best affections. We enjoy most in putting forth our whole nature, in being fully alive to all scenes and relations, and especially in preserving our noblest faculties in healthy and efficient activity. There is a constant satisfaction attending the vigorous exercise of conscience, while a feeble operation of the moral principle, which shows us what is right, but gives no strength to perform it, is a source of constant misery. There is an exhilaration, a hope, a joy, springing up within us when we *will* with power what we see to be good, when we are conscious of treading under foot the low principles and interests which would part us from God and duty, when we sacrifice firmly and unreservedly selfish desires, or the world's favor, to the claims of Christian rectitude. Moral energy inspires an unconquerable resolution, and fills us with a rare delight. The mind enlarges itself, and gains a new feeling of its capacities and destination, in these seasons of generous excitement; just as the body seems to gather new height and dimensions when a person is upborne by an exalted sentiment. The most exulting moments of life are those when, after a conflict of strong passion with the sense of duty, we come off conquerors, and are conscious that we have risen in spiritual existence. A feeling of this nature becomes in a degree habitual to the man, whose general tone of mind is a sincere purpose of adhering to the path of Christian virtue."

1814. TRUE HAPPINESS. "The true happiness of man has its seat in the mind which God has breathed into us, in the enlargement of its powers, in the elevation of its sentiments, in the firmness and purity of its principles, in its ascent to its native heaven. Compared with the capacities of this imperishable principle, and with the means of unfolding and exalting it, everything outward is worthless.

"The best of all the blessings which God gives to man is a heart alive to what is great and good, which glows at the sight of excellence, and kindles with desire to become one with what it admires. The best of all God's blessings is a heart which is accustomed to aspire to him as its source and destination, which is alive to his all-pervading presence, which meets him in his works, converses with him in solitude, blesses him in affliction, prays to him with the assurance of being heard, and hopes from him all which infinite goodness can bestow. The best of all blessings is a heart which partakes God's benevolence, which feels its relation to the universe, which is bound by friendship to the good, by sympathy to the afflicted, and by an overflowing tenderness to the narrow circle

of domestic life. The best of all blessings is a heart which carries with it a consciousness of its unbounded destiny, which looks forward to eternity as its inheritance, which hopes for perfect goodness, which feels alliance with higher orders of beings, and anticipates a union with the spirits of the just made perfect, with departed friends, and with the ascended Saviour. In such a state of heart is the true happiness of man."

1814. PERFECT SOCIETY. "Perfect social happiness is reserved for a higher stage of existence. Fill as you ought your relations here, and you will rise to a better world, and be welcomed into a happier and purer community. But this is not all. It is very doubtful whether we should be the happier, if our social connections were at present improved as much as we desire. We desire friends who will regard us with unremitting tenderness, in whose society we shall escape from every temptation, who would fly to our aid in every difficulty, to our rescue in every danger. The thought of such friends is indeed delightful; but in the present life we are not worthy of them, and I fear they would injure us by the very excess of their tenderness. They would probably keep us all our lives in a state of infantile dependence. Relying always on their aid, and shielded always by their care, we should attain no firmness of character, no courage, no proper self-dependence."

1815. INDICATIONS OF IMMORTALITY. "In the inexhaustible love of knowledge which animates the human understanding we have a bright indication of the reality of a future existence. God has given to man a spirit which is evidently designed to expand through the universe, which disdains the confinement of space, and which, although for ages it has been making progress in the knowledge of nature, still thirsts for more extended information. There is a restlessness in the human mind which no acquisition can allay. Thought is forever enlarging its horizon.

"Were man destined to live only in this world, his desires and powers would have been fitted wholly for this world, and his capacities would have been limited to the means of present enjoyment. But his faculties are now continually overleaping the bounds of earth; he delights in discoveries which have no relation to his existence on this planet; he calls to his aid the arts, not merely to render life comfortable, but to assist him in the most remote researches; invents instruments which extend his sight beyond these visible heavens, and reveal hidden stars and systems; and presses on and on to fathom the profoundest secrets of the universe. The human mind has an intense delight in what is vast and unexplored.



Does such a mind carry with it no proof that it is destined to wider spheres of experience than earth affords, — that it is designed to improve forever in the knowledge of God's wonderful works?

“ In man's power of looking forward with hope to distant and everlasting ages, we have a second clear mark of a being destined to another existence. Were this world everything to man, his longings would not stray beyond its brief span. His anticipations would be proportioned to his being. Of what use, except to torment him, would be the idea of eternity to a creature of time? Why kindle in man the sublime sentiment of immortality, if the grave is to be his doom? . . .

“ Our capacity of knowing God is another indication that we are appointed to future modes of being. The human mind is not limited to objects of sense. It has a relish for the unseen. It forever tends to rise from the effect to the cause, — from creation to its Author. This tendency may be pronounced one of the essential, instinctive principles of our nature.

“ Nor is this desire of acquaintance with God slight and transient. The human mind, by cultivation of pious sentiments, may be, and often has been, raised to an intimate union with the Divine Being, to a vivid feeling of his presence, to an habitual discernment of him in his works and providence. It has attained to sentiments of sacred rapture, to more than earthly joy, in praising, adoring, thanking him; and just in proportion as the heart is the abode of these generous emotions, it desires a nearer approach to the Divinity, and longs for an improved condition, in which He may be worshipped with pure and perfect love. When a mind has thus become alive to God, it clings to existence with increasing earnestness. It cannot endure the thought of being blotted out from among God's works, — of being deprived of the consciousness of his perfections, — of losing forever his friendship, — of rendering him no more service. Piety necessarily takes this form of desire for near communion with the Infinite Being in a future, better, endless existence; and what do all these aspirations indicate?

“ We have another indication of man's future life in the moral sensibility which God has imparted to the soul.

“ The human mind, notwithstanding its degradation, has something in it congenial with excellence. It delights to hear and read of angelic worth and greatness of character. It loves to conceive of more perfect forms of human nature than real life exhibits. To this propensity, poetry and fiction are indebted for their origin. Especially when the mind has been refined by the practice of goodness, does it naturally represent to itself a beauty of virtue such as



has never been attained on earth. It is dissatisfied with all that it has gained, and pants for greater purity. Its very improvements prompt it to desire a better existence, where present stains and imperfections will be done away, where it will fill a wider sphere of usefulness, where it may be united with the excellent whom it loves, and become worthy of their friendship. This delight in goodness, this thirst for perfection, with which the human mind is instinct, is full of promise. Were this life everything to us, would God have formed us thus capable of conceiving and desiring heights of excellence which in this life are unattainable? Will he crush the hope of moral progress, to which our very virtues give intenseness? . . . .

“The man of refinement and sensibility finds himself, as it were, in accordance with universal nature. Every scene, every season, touches some spring in his heart. The stream, the mountain, the ocean, the clouds, the distant constellations, all speak to him in a language that he understands. There is something in him akin to all this beauty and sublimity, which gives him a claim to property in the whole creation. There is especially in the soul a sensibility to the grand, awful scenes of nature. Whatever bears the impress of infinite majesty, whatever is too vast to be grasped by the senses, brings to the heart a mysterious delight. The storm, the thunder, and raging ocean, fearful as they are, still awaken a solemn pleasure, for they speak to us of almighty power, and accord with our love of greatness. Now this sensibility to whatever is great and fair in universal nature seems to attest the glory of the human soul, and to point out to it a sublime destiny. Why has God placed man amidst this boundless theatre, revealed around him this endless creation, touched his heart with the love of beauty, and given him this delightful and awful interest in all that meets his eye, if he is merely a creature of the earth, soon to shut his eyes on these majestic scenes, and to be buried forever in a narrow grave? Does this love of the infinite, this attachment to the universe, seem suitable to so frail a nature? Do they not suggest the idea of a being who belongs to the universe, and who is to fill an ever-widening sphere? . . . .

“I now proceed to another and a more decisive indication of a future life, which is furnished us by human nature. I refer to the capacity which man actually possesses of attaining to greatness of character.

“Whilst man falls far below the perfection he desires, he yet is sometimes seen to ascend to a sublimity of virtue which does honor to our nature, and proves that it is formed for heaven. We

shall discover in history persons not merely faithful in their regard to the prescribed duties of life, but who are filled with a grand disinterestedness of character, a sublime goodness, which outstrips what is positively demanded, which is prodigal of service to God and man, and overflows with sacrifices and sufferings in the cause of duty.

“These great examples show us what man may become, and what he is designed to be. These are lineaments of a noble nature, marks of a sublime capacity, a sublime destiny. We all have sometimes seen our nature manifested in these honorable forms, have seen great temptations and calamities calling forth great virtues, have seen the human countenance bright with the expression of magnanimous affections, and have felt how lovely and how glorious may be humanity. And can we believe that the soul of man, gifted with such capacities, is created for a day? Can we think that the great men who have thrown such light on the past were but meteors, extinguished as soon as kindled,—extinguished in the midst of their glory? Why were such sublime capacities given to a being of such an humble destiny? Does the all-wise Creator thus waste his noblest gifts, and is he so unconcerned for those on whom these gifts have been conferred? It is a natural sentiment, entitled to respect, that exalted goodness cannot perish. It is fitted for a better world than this, and the Creator would be dishonored were his noblest work to be lost. Nature may pass away, but can goodness, sublime goodness, that image of God, be destroyed? And if human nature be capable of this goodness, is it not destined to immortality?

“Another indication of a future state suggested by our nature is to be found in the triumph which man often obtains over death, in the manner in which he passes through the last change.

“To the sensible appearances of death, so sad and appalling, we should do well to oppose the energy of soul with which it is often encountered. Then death itself will furnish us with a proof of immortality. Sometimes the hour of death is an hour of peculiar glory for human nature. Instead of being conquered, man is seen to conquer the last foe; and he seems to suffer only that the greatness of humanity may be developed. In instances like these, the last act of the soul is an assertion of its immortality. Can we believe that this moment of sublime virtue is the moment of annihilation,—that the soul is extinguished when its beauty is most resplendent! If God intended that death should be an eternal extinction, would it be adorned, as it often is, with a radiance of the noblest, loveliest sentiments and affections of our nature? Would the greatest triumph of man be the harbinger of his ruin?

“There is another view yet more sublime. I refer to the death of the martyr to religion, to his country, to the cause of truth and human improvement. You have read of men who preferred death to desertion of duty. They encountered the menaces of power, they endured the gloom of prisons, and at length, in the fulness of their powers, were led to the place of execution. Their steps never faltered, their purpose never trembled, their looks were firm, yet mild and forgiving, and with unshaken trust in God they counted it an honor to suffer in his cause. And what now shall we say of death? That it triumphed over these men of unsubdued virtue, — that it quenched these bright spirits? Or shall we rather say that it was designed to illustrate the immortal energy of piety and virtue, and to show that the faithful soul is more than conqueror over the last foe? Can we think that God impels those who love him by the best principle in their nature to encounter death in its most dreadful forms, and then abandons them to final extinction, at the very moment when they must be to him most worthy of his love?

“We find another indication of immortality in our nature, when we consider the principal source of human enjoyment. I ask, then, what is this principal source of human enjoyment?

“A slight observation will teach us that happiness is derived chiefly from activity, from conscious growth, from the successful effort to improve our powers, from rising by our own energy to an improved condition. It is not what we have already gained, be it knowledge, property, reputation, or virtue, which constitutes our happiness, so much as the exertion of our faculties in further acquisitions. The idea of advancement is of all others the most congenial with the human mind. We delight not so much in possession as in pursuit, not so much in holding the prize as in pressing forward to seize it with the eye of hope. The feeling of progress is the great spring of happiness; and it is this which gives cheerfulness and animation under the severest lot.

“Now what does such a nature indicate? Is it true that man’s chief happiness consists in animated pursuit, in consciousness of improvement, — that, when his advancement is most swift and sure, this principle most prompts him to press forward? Is not *perfection*, then, the end of his being? Is he not made to advance, to ascend, forever? and does not this soaring nature discover a being designed for a forever brightening career? Would this insatiable thirst for progress have been given to a creature of a day, whose powers are to perish just when beginning to unfold, and whose attainments are to be buried with him in eternal oblivion? . . . .



“If this world were our home, and our only portion, should we have sentiments implanted by our Creator which teach us to live above it, and impel us to feel that it is noble to renounce it? Were this our only sphere of enjoyment, could we ever deem it beneath us, unworthy our nature?”

“But this is not all; we not only honor men when they rise above the world, its pleasures and gains, — we particularly revere them when they hold life itself with a degree of indifference, when they disdain it in comparison with principle, and advance to meet seeming destruction by a resolute and unshaken adherence to principle. On the other hand, we feel a contempt for those who cling to life as the best of blessings. We cannot endure the coward, while we are lenient even towards the excess of courage. We view with admiration the man who is prodigal of life in an honorable cause, and who prefers death to the least stain of guilt. Now these feelings surely indicate that the present is not our whole existence. Were this life everything to us, should we be so constituted as to consider the voluntary relinquishment of it as the noblest deed? Should we have feelings which impel us to cast it away? Were death entire and eternal extinction of all our power and virtue, would the welcoming of it appear the height of glory? All these feelings which I have considered, and which prompt us to sacrifice the world and life to the purity of the soul, are so many attestations from God to the dignity of the soul, so many assurances that it is destined for higher relations than those which it now sustains to the body and the world.”

1814. GREATNESS OF HUMAN NATURE, AS REVEALED BY JESUS CHRIST. “Consider the discoveries which Jesus Christ has made of the glory of human nature. His gospel may be said to be a *revelation of man to himself*. It calls us home to our own hearts, and there discloses to us capacities which should awaken the profoundest gratitude and admiration. The great unhappiness of men is, that they live abroad, they lose themselves in the accidents around, they are engrossed by outward events, by the changes of the natural or political world. They do not explore the grander world within.

“Jesus Christ thought nothing worthy of his notice but the soul of man; and the whole tone of his gospel is, that the soul is capable of all that is great and excellent, that it may become the image of God, that it may ascend to the glory and purity of angels. It is constantly his doctrine, that man is appointed to join the society of heaven, and that he will there shine as the sun, that he will



exchange his present imperfection for spotless purity. As in the child we view the future man, so in man we are taught by the gospel to view the germ of the future angel. We are taught that there is no height of excellence in the universe to which the human mind in the progress of eternity may not attain. These are views which have little to interest him who never reflects on his inward nature, who only feels that he has a body and organs of sense, and who thinks the highest happiness is to be found in the gratifications of the brute. But there are those who feel conscious of the heavenly principle within them, who, at the sight of distinguished virtue, pant to attain to its resemblance, who kindle at the thought of a boundless progression, of a never-ending ascent towards God. To such persons, how delightful is the confirmation which the gospel gives to the wishes and aspirations of their better nature! What a splendor is thrown round human nature, when it is thus viewed as the future associate of all that is most excellent in heaven, as the bright reflection of the glorious goodness of the Creator!"

### SECTION THIRD.

#### CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

1815. THE END OF CHRISTIANITY. "This idea, that the great end of Christianity, of the mission of Jesus, is to exalt the human character, although it runs through the Scriptures, has been very much overlooked. Christians have been inclined to believe that Christ lived and died to influence the mind of God, rather than the mind of man, — to make God favorable to us, rather than to make us obedient to God.

"I cannot but believe that this is a very erroneous view, and utterly unauthorized by the Scriptures. The Scriptures, I think, lead us to believe that holiness, or excellence of character, is a vastly greater blessing than pardon or forgiveness. According to the Scriptures, it is a greater privilege to be delivered from the polluting power than from the consequences of sin. According to the Scriptures, holiness, goodness, virtue, is the pearl of great price. It is God himself dwelling in the human heart. It is heaven enjoyed on earth.

"There is no happiness but in goodness. This is the felicity of God, and this is the best gift he imparts to his creatures. The noblest work of God is a holy, pure, virtuous mind; and Jesus Christ can perform no ministry more noble than the recovering of a sinful mind to a heavenly state."

1817. THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. "Our religion demands of us, not merely single acts and feelings, but a character or general frame of mind. We must have Christ's *spirit*, which means his temper; or, in other words, we must have an habitual state of the soul answering to our Lord's. . . .

"The great principle, which runs through and binds together all parts of the Christian system is this, — that our happiness, our eternal happiness, depends on the character we form. Men are very apt to forget, that in everything but religion they estimate one another, not by occasional acts, but by the general frame of the mind. There is such a thing, we all know, as *character*, something very different from particular actions and occasional feelings, something prominent in the mind, and which works itself into almost all the life. Character is not something which we put on at one moment and put off at another, not something reserved for great occasions, or which appears only in striking actions. It influences the common decisions of the judgment. It gives a peculiar form to the common opinions and purposes of the individual, and, still more, it pervades the whole mind. . . .

"Jesus Christ did not come to work upon the surface of the human heart, but to pervade it with his religion; he did not come to inculcate transient feelings and actions, but to implant permanent principles, to give a new life to the soul. It is well, it is necessary, that we should know the large demands of his gospel, so as not to lose its blessings by stopping at low attainments, — so as to propose seriously the acquisition of that devout, benevolent, and heavenly temper, which is the very essence of his religion. We cannot be too sensible that to be a Christian is a great work. If we do not rightly estimate the difficulties of our task, how can we apply to it with perseverance, resolution, spirit, and success? We have to incorporate Christian principles into our very souls. We have an inward conflict to sustain, a glorious change to accomplish, by God's assistance, in that mind which is most properly ourselves."

1819. CHRIST'S LOVE FOR MAN. "To feel the strength of Christ's benevolence whilst he was on earth, we must consider that it received no aid from any persons around him. It is comparatively easy to cherish a sentiment which operates in every other breast, to reflect a light which shines strongly on every side. But the benevolence of Christ received no accession from sympathy. The fountain of this living water was within himself. He drew his love from his own will. The age in which he lived had no thought of a

benevolence so purified, extended, and disinterested as his. It was a selfish, exclusive, bigoted age. The characters of the most improved were narrowed and debased by prejudice. Jesus Christ is seen to have been a lonely being, even among his disciples, when the tone and temper of his mind are considered. No one felt like him, or could lend fervor to his charity. His love cannot but impress us, when we thus consider how solitary, how unborrowed it was, how it resisted every social influence and example, in how full a river it flowed through a parched land, from which it received no tributary stream.

“To feel as we ought the love of Christ, we should consider also its extent. In reading his history, we see it spreading over the whole face of society, comprehending all orders of men, and embracing every human relation and interest. His love did not owe its strength, as ours too often does, to its limitation. The current was not powerful because hemmed in. It was not a close circle, within which his affection glowed to intenseness. He felt that the world was his home, and there was a prodigal liberality in his affection. He could not be happy but in expanding his sympathy to the whole range of man’s wants and sorrows. There was no class of human beings beneath his notice. If he preferred any in regard, it was the poor and forsaken; precisely because they needed most a friend and benefactor. The place of instruction in which he seemed to take particular pleasure was the open air, where all might hear him. His charity, like that light to which he often compared himself, fell on all. It spread from the little child to the ends of the earth. It blessed individuals who were near him, and at the same time reached the most remote nations and ages. In the same breast dwelt the tenderness of a son for an amiable mother, and the vast charity of the Saviour of the world. His benevolence partook at once the character of the stream which winds through the valley, and of the mighty ocean which connects all lands.

“Again, to perceive the strength of Christ’s love during his ministry on earth, we must remember that he carried with him a consciousness of his immense superiority to all around. He was not a man moving among equals. He remembered the glory he had left, and to which he was to return. The wisest and best around him must have appeared to him like children. There were none in whose society he could find the refreshment and pleasure which we derive from equal and congenial minds. Now it is when men are surrounded by inferiors, that their pride, contempt, impatience, and weariness perpetually break forth. What a striking

proof, then, of the benevolence of Jesus is it, that, so far from exhibiting indifference or contempt, he was distinguished by a lowly and gentle sweetness of deportment! His dignity was so softened by meek and tender feeling, that his disciples approached him with familiarity, lived with him as a friend, and felt no pain in his presence. We should have expected that a being so august, and whose works were so wonderful, would have struck awe into men's minds; but the amiableness of Jesus seems to have triumphed over his greatness, and to have inspired affection even stronger than reverence. We see this illustrated in every part of his history; in John's lying on his bosom, in Mary's anointing his head, and in the deep and tender grief with which his disciples, after his death, came to embalm his remains. When I consider this conscious superiority of Jesus, I cannot express my conception of the strength of his benevolence, as displayed in the affectionate familiarity with which he lived among men, in the gentleness and condescension of his manner, in his hiding his majesty behind his compassion. It is far easier to scatter blessings than to stoop to the low and to live with them as a friend. The Son of God walking amidst the band of his disciples as an equal, sitting at their table, inviting to it the publican, and conversing with all he met on the highway and in the palace with like sympathy and interest, displays to my mind a charity stronger than when he employed his power to raise the dead. In every act and relation of common life, we see that his very life and spirit was benignity."

1817. CHRIST A MEDIATOR. "The sentiment which I wish to enforce is this, — that Jesus Christ is continually, in all ages, in all times, employed and interested in behalf of the human race, — that his kindness to mankind is constantly operating, — that he bears a permanent relation to them, — that he never ceases to do good.

"It is to be feared that these conceptions are not sufficiently familiar. Many, when they think of Christ, think of him only, or chiefly, as having lived several ages ago. Their minds travel back to the time when he dwelt on earth. They conceive of him very much as a teacher or prophet who brought an important message from God, and, having declared it, died in attestation of it, and then left the world to enter into a state of reward and rest. Jesus Christ is thus separated from us, and thrown back into a distant antiquity. Without being distinctly avowed, this is with many the most habitual and frequent mode of regarding Christ, and it is one cause of the faint interest often manifested in his character. . . .



“Such a view of Christ, when no higher views are connected with it, will not take a strong hold on men of improved and cultivated minds. They will not feel that their obligations to Christ are great, when he is regarded only as a prophet of early times; and the reason is, that, from their early familiarity with the leading truths of his gospel, and from their habit of reasoning about these truths, they come to think that they might have learned these without his aid. You well know that, since the time of Jesus, the human mind has been much employed in seeking for evidences in Nature, of many interesting doctrines which he taught. The consequence is, that a system of Natural Religion has been constructed. We have works of the learned, in which God’s unity and goodness, and a future state of retribution, are supported, and, we are sometimes told, are demonstrated, by proof drawn from the creation and providence. Now, the effect of this mode of appeal to Nature in defence of these truths is, to lead men to the notion that Nature is a sufficient witness to these doctrines, and that the authority of Christ may be spared. Jesus seems to them to have conferred no signal benefit in teaching doctrines which are written on every page of God’s works. But it is forgotten that it is by the light which Christ has thrown on Nature that they are enabled to read it with so much ease. It is forgotten that, before his time, philosophers hesitated, wavered, doubted, about these simple truths of religion, as they are now termed. It is forgotten that philosophy had not taken a step towards subverting idolatry.

“Hence the more cultivated become insensible to their obligations to Christ, when viewed as a mere teacher of an early age. Hence it is not uncommon to hear Nature arrayed against Christ, to hear Nature referred to as a higher authority than Christ, to see his instructions virtually set aside when they do not correspond with what is asserted to be the doctrine of Nature, although before his coming she had taught so little, — although it is his gospel which has given her a tongue. I have intended by these remarks to show that the habit of thinking of Christ merely or chiefly as a teacher who lived several ages ago, and left behind him an excellent system of religious truth, is not suited to excite a strong interest in him, — certainly not such an interest, not such a sensibility, as pervades the New Testament.

“I would now observe, that this mode of viewing Christ is wrong, defective, inconsistent with the plain declaration of the Scriptures. According to these, Jesus Christ is not a teacher whose agency was chiefly confined to the time when he was on earth. *He ever lives and is ever active for mankind.* He sustains other offices than those

of a teacher ; he is Mediator, Intercessor, Lord, and Saviour. He has a permanent and constant connection with mankind, and a most intimate union with his Church. He is through all time, now as well as formerly, the active and efficient friend of the human race.

“ When Jesus spoke of his death, he never spoke of it as if it were to separate him from the concerns of our world, as if he were to rest from his efforts for mankind. He regarded it as an event which was to introduce him to a nobler and wider sphere of activity, where he was to contribute more extensively to the conversion and salvation of mankind. ‘ I go to prepare a place for you.’ ‘ When I am lifted up,’ that is, crucified, ‘ I will draw all men to me.’ After his resurrection, he did not speak as if his work had been finished by dying and rising again. He says, ‘ All power is given to me in heaven and earth. Lo ! I am with you to the end of the world.’

“ According to the Scriptures, Christ, the Son of God, as a reward for his humiliation, labor, and sufferings for mankind, is now exalted to universal empire. Angels are subjected to him. Nature is subjected to him. He is present by his knowledge and power with his Church. He never forgets the race for which he died. He intercedes for them. He assists them. He watches over the interests of his religion. He will make it victorious. According to the Scriptures, the time is coming when his influence, now silent, will be conspicuous, when the veil behind which he operates will be withdrawn. He is to come with hosts of angels. He is to raise the dead, to judge the world, to fulfil the solemn threatenings, and to confer the everlasting blessings of his gospel.

“ This connection of Jesus Christ with the human race seems to me very clearly unfolded in Scripture, and though it is astonishing by its vastness, yet it is in no respect incredible. That God should choose to save and bless a race of beings by the agency of an illustrious deliverer, is only an exemplification of that system which is established in nature, under which we see God committing the preservation and happiness of a large family to a parent, of a large kingdom to a sovereign. Connections and dependencies of this nature are peculiarly adapted to call forth an exalted benevolence, and the strongest and best affections of the soul. God might have raised mankind by an immediate act of power from sin and death. But it is more consistent with his character, and with his usual modes of operation, to assign this work to an exalted being capable of accomplishing it, and to place this being in the most interesting relations to our world.

“ Is it now asked, ‘ Why are these views important ? ’ I answer,

they give a new complexion to the mind which truly imbibes them. They are not mere speculative principles. They are suited to move and actuate the soul to its centre, to have a powerful operation on the affections and the life, and therefore they should often be revolved. The heart which is truly imbued with them rises to Christ with a grateful and affectionate veneration which is felt for no earthly friend. There is something peculiarly affecting in the idea of a love, a philanthropy, living and operating through ages, and looking down from heaven with an unbroken tenderness on a race like ours. . . .

“I close with observing, that a mind conversant with these views of Christ acquires a vigor of hope, and a fulness of joy, which can be derived from no other source. Our hope of the heavenly world is nourished by no views so effectually as by these. That world, so pure, so distant, so unseen, though believed by us to exist, is not easily conceived of as designed to be our future dwelling. It is by bringing it home to the heart, that Jesus is there, that Jesus in our nature is there, that he is there as a friend, and forerunner, and advocate, — it is by cherishing these views that heaven is brought nigh to us, that hope acquires courage and strength to ascend to that pure and eternal state. It is possible, by the aid which these views of Christ can give, to obtain a conviction of the future glory of human nature, altogether different from that vague and cold belief which the multitude possess, — a conviction which partakes of the vividness of immediate perception.”

1816. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. “Christ came to establish an empire of benevolence, peace, charity, on the ruins of malice, war, and discord. The work of diffusing good-will through a world of free and voluntary agents must of necessity be gradual, and, like all the great purposes of God, must advance with a slow and silent progress. But this work has been in a degree accomplished by Jesus; and what is more, there is a very remarkable adaptation in his whole character to this office of spreading peace on earth, — such an adaptation as proves him to be the predicted *Pacificator of the World*. . . .

“At the thought of this reign of benevolence, the whole earth seems to me to burst forth into rejoicing. I see the arts and civilization spreading gladness over deserted regions, and clothing the wilderness with beauty. Nations united in a league of philanthropy advance with constantly accelerating steps in knowledge and power. I see stupendous plans accomplished, oceans united, distant regions connected, and every climate contributing its pro-



ductions and treasures to the improvement and happiness of the race. In private life, I see every labor lightened by mutual confidence and aid. Indigence is unknown. Sickness and pain are mitigated, and almost disarmed, by the disinterestedness of those who suffer, and by the sympathy which suffering awakens. Every blessing is heightened and diffused by participation. Every family, united, peaceful, and knowing no contention but for pre-eminence in doing good, is a consecrated and happy retreat, the image of heaven. The necessary ills of life shrink into nothing. The human countenance puts on a new and brighter expression. Human nature with its selfishness loses its base deformity, and is clothed with the glory of God, whose designs it embraces, with whose spirit it is imbued.

“Let us, then, welcome Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who came with this spirit from heaven. Let us welcome Jesus, whose gospel has already obtained so many conquests over selfishness and malignity, and brought to reign in so many hearts the principle of charity.”

#### SECTION FOURTH.

##### SOCIETY.

1814. DANGERS OF FREE INSTITUTIONS. “One of the great benefits of a republican government is, that it admits the elevation of the best men to power. In hereditary governments, the people have no pledge that the crown will not be worn by the worst and weakest men in society. But ‘a republic,’ we are told, ‘opens wide the door of honor and office to merit,—no artificial distinctions are there employed to depress virtue and wisdom, and superior talent has at once the means of development and reward. How great, then, is the prospect that, in a republic, the power of the state will be confided to the wise and good!’ . . . .

“The privilege of electing rulers is indeed invaluable; but who does not see, in a moment, that this privilege will be a blessing or a curse, according to the character of the community? Let a people be corrupt, and who will be their favorite,—the uncorrupted patriot, the man of inflexible principle, too upright to flatter bad passions and to promise subservience to unworthy views, or the subtle, specious demagogue, who pants for power, and disdains no art by which it may be acquired? Bad men, of all others, are most greedy of political power, for they see in power, not only the gratification of ambition, but food for their avarice, and all their passions; and in a corrupt state of the community, what can



preserve the reins of government from their unholy grasp? Depraved themselves, they understand the depraved feelings of others, and can bend every popular passion to their service. To the mercenary they exhibit the allurements of office; to the envious they promise a triumph over their superiors; to the discontented and restless, a removal of fancied or exaggerated grievances. A corrupt state of society is the very element for the artful and aspiring. Unfettered by principle and inflamed by the prospect of success, they pursue power with an energy which no labor can exhaust, no disappointment repress, and on which better men look with astonishment. Better men are too much inclined to shrink in despair from a conflict with these unscrupulous spirits. They cannot stoop, they say, to artifice and falsehood. They cannot purchase office by the sacrifice of uprightness, by communion with the worst members and worst feelings of society. What have they, then, to hope from this desperate struggle with the depraved, but envenomed and unceasing abuse, and a final defeat, more fatal the longer it has been deferred? Such reflections too often paralyze the efforts of the wise and upright, and the place of honor which is their due is usurped by the unworthy.

“Is it said, that, under free institutions of society, men of talents, if not of virtue, will rise, — that a republican country will at least escape a government contemptible by its folly and weakness? Yes! men of talent will rise; but they may be those who have a talent to wield a mob, rather than to govern a state, — to build up a party, rather than to strengthen the foundations of national greatness; it may be cunning, not wisdom, the power of managing vulgar passions, which men of vulgar minds often possess in the highest degree, that will triumph. In some corrupt states of society, not even this miserable talent will be requisite to obtain promotion. Let a people yield themselves to their passions, and especially to envy, the besetting sin of republics, and they will sometimes advance men of gross and narrow minds, in preference to men of distinguished ability, for the very purpose of humbling their superiors. In a republic, eminence in talent is sometimes a crime, and rude and clamorous ignorance may be raised above it. From these causes it may happen again, as it has happened before, that the rulers of a republic will be more weak and wicked than the spoilt child of royalty. Of what use, then, is the privilege of electing rulers to a depraved people?

“These remarks naturally lead to the consideration of another advantage peculiar to republican institutions, — I mean, the power they confer of removing without violence rulers who abuse their

trust. This is indeed a great privilege ; but again I say, that its benefits depend on the character of the community. Let bad men rise to power by flattering the passions of a depraved people, and how are they to be displaced, except by the arts of men more subtle than themselves? The influence which their elevation gives is all directed to perpetuate their sway. They wield the power of the state for the great and almost exclusive purpose of strengthening the party to which they owe their greatness. For this end, patronage and office are employed to reward past services, and to attract new adherents from the ranks of their opponents. Venal presses are kept in perpetual action to increase the perversity of public sentiment, and especially to feed the spirit of party. There is no passion in our nature more headstrong, unrelenting, unbending, and unwilling to be convinced, than party spirit, and on this the artful and aspiring chiefly rely for the preservation of their power. Let this be kindled, and a corrupt administration has little to fear. To the thorough partisan no conduct of his leaders gives offence. His conscience is in their keeping. Self-will, pride, malignity, prompt him to uphold their worst measures. He would rather see the republic perish by their crimes, than owe its safety to the virtues and elevation of their opponents. I need not tell you that a corrupt republic is the very soil for party spirit. Here it grows without culture, and shoots up into deadly luxuriance, even when left to its native vigor. Let its growth be aided by human art, and it overspreads the fairest plants of social life, and darkens a nation with its poisonous branches. With these means of support, bad rulers have nothing to fear.

“ Especially if the republic be extensive, as well as corrupt, is the prospect of removing from power those who abuse it almost sure of disappointment. The rulers of such a community, seated as they are in the centre, sending forth their patronage to the remotest extremities, and guiding to one end the exertions of their supporters, have every advantage for perpetuating their power. Their opponents, scattered over a wide extent of country, having different interests, wanting bonds of union, offer a divided and feeble resistance. They complain of the oppression under which the nation groans ; but the credulous and malignant spirit of party is instructed to lay to their charge the very evils which they are struggling to avert, and a guilty administration contrives to direct upon their heads the indignation which its own crimes and follies have awakened. Thus we see how little benefit is to be expected in a corrupt republic from the power of removing unfaithful rulers.”

1817. JUSTICE TO THE POOR. "For what end are civil society, government, and property instituted? Not to build up a favored few, but for the *general welfare* of mankind. No valid reason, no justification, can be offered for the present order of things, for the division of the earth into distinct possessions, for the great inequalities of property which exist, but this, that the improvement and happiness of men in general are protected by these establishments. The rich derive their title to their wealth from this consideration, that the general welfare is advanced by the institution of property. Society was not instituted, as they are too apt to think, for them alone; but they belong to society. The true end of the social union demands that they live for the general as well as individual good, and the fact that they derive the highest benefits from civil institutions imposes on them a *peculiar* obligation to promote the public weal.

"Society is instituted for the good of all ranks of men. No single rank is made merely for the rest, but all are to exist for each other. It is a sentiment, abstractly true, though it can never be applied to practice, that a man forfeits his right to property just as far as he fails to contribute, according to his ability, to the common well-being. He breaks, in so doing, the tacit compact which every man is supposed to make who becomes or remains a member of society. According to these principles, there is a moral obligation on the rich to benefit the other ranks of society. This they necessarily do, in a measure, by employing the poor and recompensing them for their labor. Such service is a very important one. But when we consider their ability, and consider, too, the immense benefits which they receive from the labors of the poorer classes, they surely ought not to restrict their aid to this limit. . . .

"The present state of the world seems to me to demand of the rich a peculiar regard to the poorer orders of society. The time has come, when the security of civil institutions depends in no small degree on the prevalence of a conviction among the mass of the people, that these institutions are beneficial, that property with all its inequalities is a useful establishment, and that the rich are their benefactors and friends. Human nature is not formed to look patiently on superiors. A spirit of discontent generally lurks in the breasts of those to whom the humble offices of life are assigned. This spirit is at this moment peculiarly excited, and it is to be counteracted only by the diffusion of good principles through the great mass of society, and by a deportment in the rich which will engage the confidence of the poor. . . .

"The consequence of the progress of knowledge and of all im-



provements, in these later ages, undoubtedly has been to arouse a restless and revolutionary spirit through society. This spirit is not to be condemned, as if it were altogether evil. Whilst it is in part quickened by bad passions, it is in part the natural and proper movement of the mind in pursuit of a better state of things. It is traced up to the fact, that the human mind has outgrown old institutions. It is an impulse which we cannot but hope is to result in a more just and happy social order.

“ But still this spirit threatens evil, and it needs to be regulated and checked by the diffusion of sound principles of religion and morality. We must not imagine that this revolutionary spirit has exhausted itself. Its violence has been stayed by late events. But events cannot withstand the principles of human nature, and the powerful causes which are now exciting the activity of the human mind. The press, we must remember, is at work, — the mightiest engine ever set in motion by man. A freer intercourse, a more intimate connection, a more rapid communication of thoughts and feelings than was ever known before, subsists between men of the same class, and between different classes of society. We must not expect that society, under these influences, is to return to its former state. It cannot rest as much on prejudice as it has done. It must rest more on reflection and on principle. In this country in particular, where the majority govern, where all ranks have an equal agency in the election of rulers, the chief support of social order is to be found, not in an outward power of government, but in the internal conviction and moral and religious sentiments of the community. Never did such strong motives, even of a worldly nature, exist as among ourselves, for the improvement of the poorer classes of society.”

1817. ADDRESS BEFORE THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF INDIGENT BOYS. “ The strongest argument for education is found in the nobleness of the human faculties, and the poor bring with them into being the same faculties with the opulent. Nature knows none of our arbitrary distinctions. The child in the humblest walks of life is as richly gifted, as largely endowed, as in the highest. He has within the same inexhaustible mine of power and affection, the same resources of heart and intellect. A flame is kindled in his breast which is never to die. Such a being is not to be viewed as an inferior animal, or as important only because he can perform certain labors for the community. He is valuable when considered as an *individual*, as well as when considered in relation to society. He has a nature which, for its own sake,



deserves to be developed, and which God gave for the very end that it should be improved.

“ Among the poor are not only all the essential qualities of mind and capacities of improvement which belong to all men, but all the varieties of intellect which are found in other ranks of life. It is, I believe, a fact, that a large proportion of that heaven-inspired energy which is ordinarily called genius, and which has done so much to advance the human mind, to open new regions of thought and action, and to give a new impulse to society, has been furnished by the inferior orders of society. There is the same chance, to speak in human language, that the sublime faculties of a Locke and Newton are wrapped up in the child of the poor man as in the titled descendant of nobles. As many great minds have dawned in hovels as in palaces. And the poor have not only their proportion of superior intellect, but they carry within them seeds of the highest and noblest virtues, of capacities of elevated devotion, of disinterestedness, of heroism, of those properties which raise our nature from the dust and mark out its immortal destiny. The possession of such a nature as this by the poor is certainly an unanswerable argument for opening to them, as far as possible, all those advantages which call forth the mind and heart, which give elevation of character, and render the whole of life a state of improvement. . . .

“ Of all our benevolent institutions, those which regard *children* seem to me to hold the first rank. Let charity, indeed, extend itself with a divine activity to all the varieties of human want; let it multiply its forms of action in proportion to the forms of guilt and suffering; let its channels be everywhere widened and deepened; let it erect hospitals, establish dispensaries and provident institutions, watch over almshouses, open receptacles for the reformation of the vicious, and administer comfort to the aged and dying. The aged and dying, however, will soon cease to suffer; their journey is almost finished; and the poor of middle age have formed characters which yield slowly and reluctantly to the influence of any means of improvement. But the child has just begun to live, with a mind pliant and tender, with habits not now rigid and unyielding, with a heart not now tainted and hardened, yet with propensities which, if unchecked, will probably issue in guilt and misery. Abandon him to ignorance, and his youth, if he struggle through its hardships, will train him to crimes for which society has reared the prison and the gallows. . . .

“ The children of poor families too often inherit the vices and miseries of their parents. Brought up in filth, seeing constantly the worst examples, hearing licentious and profane conversation,

abandoned to ignorance and idleness, or, if employed, only employed to beg in the streets, to extort money by falsehoods, to practise a thousand frauds, — from such children what can you expect but lives of sloth and guilt, leading to poverty more abject, if possible, than that to which they were born? This is the most affecting circumstance attending poverty produced by vice. Who can think without an aching heart of the child nursed at the breast of an intemperate mother, subjected to the tyranny and blows of an irritable, intoxicated father, and at length cast out upon the world without one moral or religious principle, or one honest method of acquiring subsistence? Take him under your protection, nurture his tender years, and you may hope to form him to intelligence and industry and virtue, to a life of cheerful and useful labor, and to the felicities of a better world. Do not, do not let him perish.”

1819. OUR DUTIES TO THE POOR. “Formerly, the task of a Christian minister in pleading for the poor was comparatively easy. He had the plain precepts of his Master to support him, and he found in men’s breasts instinctive principles and sympathies which responded to these precepts. Of late, however, we have had abundant discussions and speculations on the causes and remedies of poverty, which, however well designed, have tended to shake men’s sense of obligation to relieve their poor brethren, and have given pretexts to the selfish and avaricious for shutting their hearts and hands. We have been told that poverty grows by charity, that the prospect of relief begets improvidence, that our giving bribes men to forsake labor, that the way to check beggary is to make it an intolerable condition; — from all which the inference seems natural, that the less we give, the better. If this doctrine has not been set forth in so many words, yet I think there has been an approach to it, so that giving to the poor is by some thought a less binding duty than formerly.

“I mean not to deny that much useful truth has been brought before the public by the late discussions on the subject of poverty. I am far from denying that injudicious, indiscriminate charity has swelled the evil which it hoped to alleviate. The Christian precept, to ‘give alms,’ has sometimes done injury, and chiefly because it has not been limited, as it should be, by another precept, namely, ‘He that will not work, neither shall he eat,’ that is, be supported by charity. In the Dark Ages, alms-giving was thought an expiation for sin and a passport to heaven. The dying left legacies to convents, to be doled out to daily mendicants without regard to their character or state, so that society lost the labor of many of

its strongest and healthiest members. And this evil has not been confined to the Catholics. Protestant sloth has been as injurious as Romish superstition. Too many among us give from a vague sense of duty, but forget the obligation of giving vigilantly, carefully, in the manner most suited to do good. It is easier to give money than time and personal attention. Hence, charity nourishes idleness instead of solacing want, and is a bounty on improvidence. Alms-giving, I freely allow, has caused much evil. I am also prepared to go farther and say, that, let us give ever so judiciously, we shall occasionally do evil, as well as good. The objections made to the most cautious charity are not wholly without foundation. But this is no reason for ceasing to give. In making these admissions, we are only saying that charity partakes of the imperfection of all human things. The truth is, we seldom or never receive or communicate an unmixed good. Every virtue produces occasional evil.

“It is sometimes objected to alms-giving, as I have intimated, that to prevent poverty is better than to relieve it; and that there is but one way of prevention, which is, to take from men all expectation of relief if they become poor. They will then, it is thought, have motives which can hardly fail to keep them from want. But, unluckily for such reasoning, there is one way only of cutting off this expectation, and God forbid that we should ever resort to it. That only way is, to drive all human feeling from our breasts; for as long as any kindness exists in a community, so long there will be resources open to the poor, let their poverty come how it may, and so long relief will be expected by the improvident. I repeat it, there is but one way of suppressing this hope of relief. We must cast from us all kind feeling. We must turn our hearts to stone. We must bring ourselves to see unmoved the beggar die at our doors. We must make up our minds sternly, inflexibly, to give nothing, let misery assail us with ever so piercing a cry, with ever so haggard, and worn, and famished a look; for nothing but this will prevent the improper dependence which is said to generate poverty. Let any sympathy survive, and it will act and be a hope to the improvident; and can any man seriously think that the evils of this hope are so great, that to avoid them we should turn ourselves into brutes, dry up the fountains of humanity within us, part with all that is tender and generous in our nature? I am free to say that the most injudicious alms-giving is an infinitely less evil to society than this extinction of sympathy. Better multiply beggars, than make ourselves monsters. Kind affection is the life of a community, and the excesses of these affections are to be chosen before a frozen selfishness. . . .



“ These remarks will not, I hope, be misunderstood. I am not pleading for injudicious alms-giving. It is a great evil. But there is an opposite evil which I think greater, and that is, making use of the bad consequences of charity as arguments for banishing charity from society ; and to this point many late speculations on poverty have seemed to me to tend. Christ’s precept to give to the poor is not a blemish in his system, but an important and noble part of it. The occasional abuses of charity are not to discourage us in exercising this virtue. We must feel, however, that we but half do this duty when we do it carelessly. We must strive to give so that the least evil and the greatest good may result from our beneficence. . . .

“ Does any one ask, ‘ Why shall I pity and help the poor man ? ’ I answer, because he is A MAN ; because poverty does not blot out his humanity ; because he has your nature, your sensibilities, your wants, your fears ; because the winter wind pierces him, and hunger gnaws him, and disease racks and weakens him, as truly as they do you. Place yourself, my friend, in his state ; make yourself, by a strong effort of thought, the inhabitant of his unfurnished and cold abode, and then ask why you should help him. He is a man, though rags cover him, though his unshorn hair may cover his human features, — a member of your family, a child of the same Father, and, what is most important, he not only has your wants and feelings, but shares with you in the highest powers and hopes of human nature. He is a man in the noblest sense, created in God’s image, with a mind to think, a conscience to guide, a heart which may grow warm with sentiments as pure and generous as your own. To some this may seem declamation. There are some who seldom think of or value *man as man*. It is man born in a particular rank, clad by the hand of fashion and munificence, moving in a certain sphere, whom they respect. Poverty separates a fellow-being from them, and severs the golden chain of humanity. But this is a gross and vulgar way of thinking, and religion and reason cry out against it. The true glory of man is something deeper and more real than outward condition. A human being, created in God’s image, and, even when impoverished by vice, retaining power *essentially the same with angels*, has a mysterious importance, and his good, where it can be promoted, is worthy the care of the proudest of his race. . . .

“ Next to the great doctrine of immortal life, we may say that the most characteristic element of our religion is that of UNIVERSAL CHARITY. And the doctrine of immortality and the duty of charity are not so separate as many may think ; for love of benevolence is



the spirit of the eternal world, the temper which is to make us blest beyond the grave, and to give us hereafter the highest enjoyment of the character and works of our Creator. There is another view by which it appears that the Christian doctrine of immortality blends with and sustains charity;—for, according to this doctrine, all men are to live forever, Christ died for all, all are essentially equal, and the distinctions of their lives are trifles. Thus it is seen that the poor are recommended with an infinite power to the love and aid of their brethren. No man can read the New Testament honestly, and not learn to measure his religion chiefly by his benevolence. If the spirit, and example, and precepts of Jesus Christ have not taught us to love our fellow-creatures, we have no title whatever to the name and the hope of Christians. If we have not learned this lesson, we have learned nothing from our Master. About other things Christians may dispute, but here there can be no controversy. Charity is a duty placed before us with a sunlike brightness. It comes to us from the lips, the life, the cross, of our Master; and if charity be not in us, then Christ does in no degree live within us, then our profession of his religion is a mockery, then he will say to us in the last day: ‘I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, thirsty and ye gave me no drink. I know you not. Depart.’”

1820. THE GLORY OF A STATE. “It is plain, that, to promote the good of our country, we must know what that good is, and as misapprehensions on this subject have done infinite injury, so just views will show us that every man in every class may contribute to it. The honor and happiness of a community consist not so much in the ability and acts of its public men, as in the character, spirit, and condition of its citizens; and whatever or whoever advances these builds up the public welfare.

“If I were to express in a line what constitutes the glory of a state, I should say, *it is the free and full development of Human Nature*. That country is the happiest and noblest, whose institutions and circumstances give the largest range of action to the human powers and affections, and call forth man in all the variety of his faculties and feelings. That is the happiest country, where there is most intelligence and freedom of thought, most affection and love, most imagination and taste, most industry and enterprise, most public spirit, most domestic virtue, most conscience, most piety. Wealth is a good only as it is the production and proof of the vigorous exercise of man’s powers, and is a means of bringing out his affections and enlarging his faculties. Man is the only

glory of a country, and it is the advancement and unfolding of human nature which is the true interest of a state.

“If this be true, we learn what is the great end of government, the highest good of civil polity. It is *liberty*. I am almost tempted to say that this is the only political blessing, and the only good gift, which law and order can confer on a country. By liberty I do not mean what anciently bore the name, for anciently they had little but the name. I mean the protection of every individual in his rights, and an exemption from all restraints but such as the public good requires. We do not want government to confer on us positive blessings, but simply to secure to us the unobstructed exercise of our powers in working out blessings for ourselves. The spring of happiness is in man’s own breast, not in his government; and the best office of government is to remove obstructions to this inexhaustible energy of the living spirit within us. Liberty, then, is the greatest political blessing, the distinction of a well-governed country. It is a good which cannot be measured. The glory of a country, then, consists in the free character of its institutions, in the security they give to every man’s rights. . . .

“Every man may promote the glory of his country, for every man, whatever be his sphere, may put forth his powers in useful pursuits, and express and give some extension to right principles and virtuous affections. Let none imagine that they can do no good to the community because they are in private stations. The error has always been to ascribe to public men and public institutions an undue share in the prosperity of a nation. The great powers in the natural world, on which its motion, life, beauty, happiness, depend, are subtle, and everywhere diffused; and so the most effectual springs of a nation’s felicity are very different from the cumbrous machinery which works at the seat of government. They are silent as the principle of life in the animal frame. They consist in what we call the *spirit of a people*, in a general respect for rights, which is the sole foundation of civil liberty, in industry, temperance, intelligence, humanity, and piety. These are the elements of a country’s life, and he who multiplies and invigorates these is a public benefactor.

“The sentiment, that a country’s happiness consists chiefly in its virtue, is, I know, a trite one; but, if I mistake not, its truth is at this moment receiving some new illustrations, and the time seems to be coming, when it will be felt as it has never been felt before. Whoever looks at Europe will see, I think, that a new spirit has gone forth among the nations; that the human mind is unusually shaken; that society demands some new organization, and that

new powers, and those of a *moral* nature, must be set at work to sustain its institutions. The old methods of keeping men in order — I mean military force, state religions, and the show and pomp of courts — have lost much of their efficacy, and lost them, not merely through temporary causes, but through the very progress of the human mind. There is an accumulation of intelligence and energy, a consciousness of power, in the mass of the people, never possessed before; and such a state of society seems to me to demand a stronger influence and wider diffusion of moral and religious principle than formerly. The old arts of restraining a people by superstition and ignorance will no longer avail. A purer religion and a purer morality must take their place, or the prospects of the world are dark indeed. Governments are certainly weakened; they have lost in an unprecedented degree the confidence of the governed; the people are more intelligent and combined; and unless an inward principle of order be substituted for outward restraint, unless governments reform themselves and aid in reforming society, we may find that we have but entered upon the horrors of the revolutionary period. These speculations may be founded on imperfect knowledge of the state of the world; but of one great principle I have no doubt, that we are passing through a process which will give new efficacy to the conviction, that the stability of governments is their justice, and that the prosperity of states rests on moral improvements, on a Pure, Rational Religion, on a Spirit of Humanity, within every nation of Christendom, and toward all mankind."

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## CHAPTER V. — MIDDLE-AGE MINISTRY.

Æt. 34-42. 1814-1822.

WE have traced Mr. Channing's course through the irksome years of the Unitarian controversy, and have watched his spiritual growth as manifested in the sermons preached to his people. And now we would observe him in his social, pastoral, and home relations during this period of his middle-age ministry. But before describing this portion of his life, it may serve yet further to illustrate his character as a controversialist and a theologian, to make a few remarks, which are naturally suggested by the preceding chapters.

The first point to be noticed, and it is an important one, is, that it was his sense of duty to the cause of Free Inquiry, endangered



as he thought by a bigoted conservatism, which led Mr. Channing into controversy. The individualizing tendency of Protestantism was then, in New England as elsewhere, swelling like the waters of a freshet, which threaten to sweep away dikes and cultivated acres, as well as icy fetters. But though he saw the risks to which Christendom was exposed, through the rashness produced by rationalism in the self-willed and superficial, Mr. Channing at once recognized that it was as wrong as it was vain to attempt to dam up the liberal spirit which, on all sides, was seeking a larger form of thought and life. He welcomed the spring-time, and accepted cheerfully the inconveniences of a transition age. The *unity in uniformity*, enforced by the decrees of infallible councils, and by the creeds of Protestant synods, had passed forever; and in the future was foreshadowed a *unity in variety*, arising spontaneously among the body of believers bound into one by the consciousness of limitation and error, the desire of concert and mutual reverence. He rejoiced to think that the symbol was thus to give place to the reality, that the constrained catholicity of a dominant clergy was to make room for the universal communion of Christians, filled with one spirit of holy love.

Meanwhile, a period was to be passed through of sectarian division, wherein each party, in its wish to be faithful to its own convictions, would be tempted to treat rival denominations with injustice. This era of debate he saw to be inevitable. It was folly to fear it. It was mere waste of time to oppose or to mourn over it. Duty urged him to follow the providential leading, with confidence to seek clearer views, with candor to listen to all who uttered their sincere opinions, never to cover up doubt by make-belief or half-belief, without dogmatism to be decided, and patiently to wait for the time when glimpses should be enlarged to complete vision. As faith ascends into knowledge, it becomes ever more apparent that according to Divine design the multiplicity of minds is a means of harmony, that the most bitterly opposed partisans are each other's necessary complements, and that the church cannot afford to spare a single sect till the truth which it embodies has attained its rightful place. The principle by which Mr. Channing was governed he has thus distinctly expressed, and the passage throws much light upon his views of his own position and duties:—

“It is due to myself to say, that the controversial character of a part of my writings is to be ascribed, not to the love of disputation, but to the circumstances in which I was called to write. It was my lot to enter on public life at a time when this part of the country



was visited by what I esteem one of its sorest scourges; I mean, a revival of the spirit of intolerance and persecution. I saw the commencement of those systematic efforts, which have been since developed, for fastening on the community a particular creed. Opinions which I thought true and purifying were not only assailed as errors, but branded as crimes. Then began what seems to me one of the gross immoralities of our times, the practice of aspersing the characters of exemplary men, on the ground of differences of opinion as to the most mysterious articles of faith. Then began those assaults on freedom of thought and speech, which, had they succeeded, would have left us only the name of religious liberty. Then it grew perilous to search the Scriptures for ourselves, and to speak freely according to the convictions of our own minds. I saw that penalties, as serious in this country as fine and imprisonment, were, if possible, to be attached to the profession of liberal views of Christianity, — the penalties of general hatred and scorn; and that a degrading uniformity of opinion was to be imposed by the severest persecution which the spirit of the age would allow. At such a period, I dared not be silent. To oppose what I deemed error was to me a secondary consideration. My first duty, as I believed, was, to maintain practically and resolutely the rights of the human mind; to live and to suffer, if to suffer were necessary, for that intellectual and religious liberty which I prize incomparably more than my civil rights. I felt myself called, not merely to plead in general for freedom of thought and speech, but, what was more important and trying, to assert this freedom by action. I should have felt myself disloyal to truth and freedom, had I confined myself to vague commonplaces about our rights, and forborne to bear my testimony expressly and specially to proscribed and persecuted opinions. The times required that a voice of strength and courage should be lifted up, and I rejoice that I was found among those by whom it was uttered and sent far and wide. The timid, sensitive, diffident, and doubting needed this voice; and without it, would have been overborne by the clamor of intolerance. If in any respect I have rendered a service to humanity and religion, which may deserve to be remembered when I shall be taken away, it is in this. I believe, that, had not the spirit of religious tyranny been met, as it was, by unyielding opposition in this region, it would have fastened an iron yoke on the necks of this people. The cause of religious freedom owes its present strength to nothing so much as to the constancy and resolution of its friends in this quarter. Here its chief battle has been fought, and not fought in vain. The spirit of intolerance is not, indeed, crushed; but its tones are sub-

duced, and its menaces impotent, compared with what they would have been, had it prospered in its efforts here.”<sup>1</sup>

But though thus ready to defend freedom of conscience against every form of oppression, however plausible, Mr. Channing entertained no personal ill-will towards those whose course he was called upon to resist. He had genuine dignity, indeed, and a high sense of honor, and was capable of feeling deep indignation; but he had been for years too chastened in spirit to indulge anger or to cherish unkindness. And as he was considered by some of his Orthodox adversaries to have been quite too stern in his mode of conducting controversy, it is but right to mention one or two facts, and to give some extracts from his correspondence, which may serve to set forth his character in its true colors.

In relation to his letters to Dr. Worcester, one of his brothers thus writes:—

“I was living in his house at this period, and when he had finished the letter, he read it to the Rev. Mr. — and myself. We both at once made complaints at its mildness, and insisted that it had the tone of a timid man begging for mercy, rather than of a brave one who was supporting a righteous cause. By our importunity he was persuaded to modify it. He expressed the kindest feelings, but, on the other hand, was unwilling to seem lukewarm in what he regarded as a very serious matter. Many parts were altered accordingly; and when the letter was finally sent to the press, its original gentleness was merged in the more emphatic passages which he had inserted in consideration of our urgent requests. Years afterwards, I believe in 1832, I was reading a tract of his, while sitting with him in his study. Its vehemence pained me so much, that I could not but remonstrate against its spirit. He listened patiently, hesitated for a moment, and then, looking up with the sweetest smile, said: ‘The sins of earlier days arise against me. I followed the judgment of friends in printing that. I deeply regret that there is a word there which strikes you as being bitter. Surely I never felt an unkind emotion towards any person for a difference of opinion.’ As he spoke, the whole history of the tract

<sup>1</sup> Preface to Reviews, Discourses, and Miscellanies, 1830. — The statements and arguments presented on the Orthodox side may be found in “A Letter on Religious Liberty, by Moses Stuart, Professor of Sacred Literature in the Theological Seminary, Andover.” Boston, 1830. Professor Stuart therein avers that the accusations of Dr. Channing are “NOT TRUE,” page 37. This letter was replied to in “Two Letters on Religious Liberty, by Bernard Whitman.” Boston, 1830. The reply called out a rejoinder in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, which Mr. Whitman answered in a “Third Letter.”

flashed upon me. It was the very letter to Dr. Worcester to which I had been instrumental in giving its present form. This was by no means the first or last occasion when he heard his own mildness reproved, and when he was induced, by fear of betraying the cause in which he was engaged, to use a warmth of expression that was really in discord with his own temper.

"In all differences of opinion with others, I never heard him utter a harsh word, and there were always marked expressions of disapproval, whenever he saw acrimony or unfairness manifested, however obnoxious the person might be against whom they were directed. When Dr. Griffin, who was the head of the Orthodox party, and bitterly opposed to Liberalism, was officiating at Park Street Church, a slanderous report was raised against him, as malevolent as it was false. I was walking with my brother one day in the Mall, when, Dr. Griffin having passed us, he was led to speak of this base story. He declared how deeply he was shocked to see a smile of triumph on the countenances of the Doctor's opponents, — many of them being of course his own supporters. His language on this occasion was the strongest which I ever heard fall from his lips. As he spoke of the spirit manifested by these men, made mad by theological hostility, he characterized it as exhibiting the basest elements in human nature, and as truly diabolical.

"I will give one more example to illustrate his habitual generosity toward opponents. A clergyman from a distant part of the State preached some sermons in Boston, in 1817, in which he severely criticised, and indeed actually vilified, the character of the Liberal clergy in the most wholesale manner. I, in company with several acquaintances, was present. In the evening the discourse became naturally the topic of conversation among us. Much indignation was expressed. But my brother directed all his remarks to softening the feelings of those who were aggrieved by the abuse of honored friends. 'I cannot blame this stranger so severely,' said he; 'these harsh judgments never originated from himself; he was led by others into false impressions. How sad is controversy, that it should thus tempt our opponents to misrepresent men whom they might and should know better!' Thus did he endeavor to find extenuating circumstances whereby to explain, if not excuse, the conduct of his adversaries. These slight recollections are of worth only as proving the essential disposition and uniform behavior of the man. He was thoroughly magnanimous and just."

The view thus given of Mr. Channing's character, by one who



was an eyewitness of his course, will be confirmed by the following extracts from his letters.

1820. "I have read enough of Dr. Carpenter's work to learn its object, and I lament that the state of things among you has laid on him the duty of exposing so much at length the misrepresentations of Bishop Magee. . . . I am too far from you to judge what is best, and since this work has been thought necessary, I cannot but rejoice that it has been undertaken by a man so imbued with the Christian spirit as Dr. Carpenter. The time has been, when it would have been thought good policy to oppose to the Bishop a controversial bully, able to meet him on his own ground and to fight him with his own weapons, and as little scrupulous about the means of humbling an adversary. But I trust the times of this ignorance are past, and that we have learned the wisdom as well as virtue of defending truth with moderation and benevolence. That party, especially, which makes its appeal to reason, and looks for success to the extension of deliberate and impartial inquiry, has an interest in banishing passion and violence from controversy, and giving the example of forbearance and candor."

1821. "The death of Dr. Worcester affected me not a little, for you remember that he was one of my opponents in the Unitarian controversy, and certainly not the most forbearing. I trust that I learned from that experience a new lesson of tenderness and charity towards those who differ from me, and who may seem to be injurious. When I see how fast my theological adversaries and myself are passing away, and how soon our motives are to be laid open at a higher tribunal, I cannot but hope, as I look back to the time of our controversy, that I have cherished towards them no unchristian feelings.

"I have understood that Dr. Worcester fell a victim to his zeal in the cause of missions, and for this every Christian will honor his memory."

Of the three grand classes into which Christians may be grouped, the TRINITARIANS, the NATURALISTS, and the MEDIATORIALISTS, Mr. Channing undoubtedly belonged at this period to the last. He did not look upon man as utterly corrupt in sin, and see in Christ the incarnate God, descended upon earth to bear the burden of our guilt and woe, and by self-inflicted penalty to provide the means of our justification and pardon. But neither did he regard man as in a normal state, advancing by natural progress, and see in Jesus only a person of religious genius, who, under the impulse of a fine temperament, and the stimulant of enthusiasm in his nation, had



attained to a union with God which was equally accessible to every human being. Undoubtedly he recognized a portion of truth in each of these systems, although dissenting from both. But he agreed rather with those, scattered among all sects, and forming, probably, in all ages, the majority of believers, who consider mankind neither totally depraved, nor yet merely undeveloped, but actually degenerate, through an abuse of free will. And in Jesus Christ he reverently acknowledged a sublime being, who, by his coming upon earth, had brought about a crisis in the condition of humanity, had touched with healing power the vital springs of goodness in our race, and had opened the heavens through which evermore flow in full influxes of spiritual life. With no impatience to invent satisfactory answers to mysteries which he saw to be unsolved, and especially anxious not to divert men's regards from the goodness of God's beloved Son by speculations upon his rank in the scale of being, he yet for himself was inclined to believe in Christ's pre-existence, and his continued mediatorial power over human affairs. In a word, he was then an Arian. And any one who has read the extracts already given from his sermons will have perceived that passages in his published writings, which have often been interpreted as merely eloquent rhetoric, were really the calm suggestion of thoughts, which, though he forced them upon none, he yet inwardly cherished as of profoundest interest.

Hereafter, perhaps, more than at present, it will be recognized as Mr. Channing's distinguishing peculiarity, that he blended so harmoniously in his theology views of Christianity which are usually held as irreconcilable. Then, possibly, the deliberateness with which he kept before his mind, as open questions, doctrines which those around him on all sides dogmatically settled, may be considered a higher title to honor than the decision with which he stepped forward to uphold the right of free thought and speech. However this may prove to be, the fact undeniably was, that, while he formed the most free and generous estimate of human nature, he held opinions in regard to the Divine government, spiritual influences, a mediator, and the kingdom of heaven, which by most Liberal Christians would be considered rather mystical than rational. Has it been observed how closely he connected his confidence in the essential dignity of man, his aspirations after perfect union of the human will with the Divine, his hope for the future greatness of mankind, with the fact of the life of Jesus Christ? In this complex theology of Mr. Channing shall we find a proof that he was a man of imagination and sentiment more than a philosopher, or shall we rather admire the wisdom which, while it made him bold

and frank where he was convinced, kept him humbly guarded before the unveiled wonders of the eternal world?

It certainly was not owing to unwillingness to abandon wonted habits of thought, to sluggish indifference, or to any form of selfish fear, that Mr. Channing chose to occupy the middle ground in theology; for nothing characterized him more than the youthful eagerness with which he greeted the advent of every newly discovered truth. He was "not a watcher by the tomb, but a man of the resurrection." He lived in the mountain air of hope. And at this period of his life he was breathing in the freshness with which the whole intellect of Christendom seemed inspired, as it pressed onward across the wide prairie which the science, philosophy, poetry, and revolutionary tendencies of the age had opened. It was with intense delight that he made acquaintance with the master minds of Germany, through the medium, first, of Madame de Staël, and afterward of Coleridge. He recognized in them his leaders. In Kant's doctrine of the Reason he found confirmation of the views which, in early years received from Price, had quickened him to ever deeper reverence of the essential powers of man. To Schelling's sublime intimations of the Divine Life everywhere manifested through nature and humanity, his heart, devoutly conscious of the universal agency of God, gladly responded. But above all did the heroic stoicism of Fichte charm him by its full assertion of the grandeur of the human will. Without adopting the systems of either of these philosophers, and, fortunately perhaps for him, without being fully acquainted with these systems, he yet received from their example the most animating incentives to follow out the paths of speculation into which his own mind had entered. In the extracts given from his sermons, there is nothing more striking than his increasing spirituality, his high ideal of human nature, his lofty enthusiasm, and glowing hope. In thought, act, speech, he was a poet, though his chosen position was the pulpit, and the sermon his chief medium of expression.

But it was to an English writer that he was indebted for yet higher pleasure, and perhaps as efficient aid. This was Wordsworth, of whom he always spoke with the most respectful affection, as of a benefactor by whom he felt that his heart and mind had been equally enriched. Shortly after the "Excursion" appeared, he obtained a copy of it, which was sent over by a London house to a publisher who knew little of its worth. It had been heralded by the ridicule of the Edinburgh Review, which then was a dictator to the literary world of America yet more than of Great Britain. But to Mr. Channing it came like a revelation. He kept it

constantly by him; and, as he once said, had "never read anything but Shakespeare more." He saw a beauty even in its prosaic passages, admired the rare felicity of its language, and was inclined to consider it the most elaborate and finished production of the age. But it was the spirit of the man, rather than the skill of the author, that attracted him. Wordsworth's mingled reverence and freedom, loyalty and independence, manly simplicity and heroism, — his piety, trust, humility, profound conscience, and earnest aspiration, — his respectful, tender, appreciative love of man, recognizing greatness under lowliest disguises, and spreading sweet sanctions around every charity of social life, — his intense love of beauty, all-vivifying imagination, and mystical adoration of the Universe as the shadow of the Infinite Being, — his subjective habits of thought, metaphysically refined mode of observation, power of looking beneath all surfaces to the life, and beneath all forms to the spirit, — his high idealism, humanity, and hearty naturalness, in a word, combined to form a character with which Mr. Channing's was in full harmony.

The following extract from a letter to Mrs. Cappe illustrates at once the influence of Wordsworth over his mind, and indicates the direction which his thoughts were taking.

1820. "I occasionally see the *Monthly Repository*, and among the rational, sensible, and matter-of-fact communications which fill that work I have met now and then with pieces from a writer who seems to have made the discovery that Unitarianism and imagination and poetry are not irreconcilable foes. The author is one of Wordsworth's school. When I tell you that I incline to the heresy of this writer, and that I wish to see among Unitarians a development of imagination and poetical enthusiasm, as well as of the rational and critical power, you will not wonder at my curiosity in wishing to learn who this writer is. I have before told you how much I think Unitarianism has suffered from union with a heart-withering philosophy. I will now add, that it has suffered also from a too exclusive application of its advocates to biblical criticism and theological controversy, in other words, from a too partial culture of the mind. I fear that we must look to other schools for the thoughts which thrill us, which touch the most inward springs, and disclose to us the depths of our own souls. Pardon me for finding so much fault. It is not owing, I hope, to censoriousness. I only wish that truth may be so presented as to be friendly to our whole nature; that it may develop, not chill, those powers which have always exercised the mightiest sway among men, and which seem most akin to inspiration."



The mood in which Wordsworth looked upon nature, man, and the course of Divine Providence, was for the most part quite congenial to Mr. Channing. But, from temperament and position, he was inclined to take a far more active part in the stirring scenes of the time than the poet seemed to encourage. To a great extent, indeed, their views of the French Revolution, and of Napoleon's career, were the same. Together they had stood upon the mountain peaks of religious faith, while the tornado of atheism, charged with the red lightnings of military power, and the destructive hail of radicalism, had swept across the civilized world; together they had seen the storm subside beneath the mild airs of humanity, and had looked down over valleys and lowlands serenely smiling in the sunshine of Divine love. But the lesson which Mr. Channing had learned from this tremendous experience was a conviction of the need and opportunity of peaceful reform. His gaze was bent upon the future, not the past. In full justice practically rendered to the nature of man,—in opportunities for culture, refinement, social position, wealth, and free intercourse opened to all classes equally,—in a spirit of brotherhood embodied in honorable and humane relations,—he foresaw the means, the only means, of re-establishing reverence, loyalty, courtesy, and contentment. Thus are we brought to consider the position which he held in political and philanthropic movements. And we shall find that the earnest humanity of his youth and early manhood had not wasted itself, but rather gained depth and volume in its onward course.

Extracts already given from his sermons have sufficiently indicated Mr. Channing's feelings in regard to the military despotism of France under the stern sway of Bonaparte. We are now to witness the joy and hope with which he greeted the news of the overthrow of the man whom he then, and through life, regarded as an atrocious tyrant. On the 8th of June, 1814, a number of the citizens of Boston and Massachusetts assembled at the house of the Hon. William Phillips, the Lieutenant-Governor of the State,—

“To consult upon the propriety of noticing the event of the entire subversion of the military despotism which had so long desolated the Christian and civilized world, in a manner suited to its character and importance, and to the sentiments which it was calculated to inspire. Deeply impressed with the magnitude and the beneficial and lasting influences of this revolution upon the best and dearest interests of society, they had no hesitation in recommending to their fellow-citizens the observance of a solemn religious festival, in commemoration of the goodness of God in humbling unprincipled ambition, in crushing wicked and unjust power, in delivering the



world from cruel and disgraceful bondage, in restoring to mankind the enjoyment of their just rights under the protection of legitimate government, and in giving to nations the cheering prospect of permanent tranquillity. For that purpose a large and respectable committee was chosen to make the necessary arrangements, composed of the following gentlemen : —

HON. C. GORE,  
 “ GEORGE CABOT,  
 “ JOHN WARREN,  
 “ B. PICKMAN, JR.,  
 “ GEORGE BLISS,  
 “ JOHN PHILLIPS,  
 “ H. G. OTIS,

HON. T. H. PERKINS,  
 “ E. H. MILLS,  
 “ JOHN LOWELL,  
 “ SAMUEL PUTNAM,  
 “ WM. SULLIVAN,  
 REV. WM. E. CHANNING,  
 “ JOSHUA HUNTINGTON.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Channing was elected to deliver the sermon. On the 15th of June, the day appointed, a large assembly, composed of the most intelligent and influential persons in the community, filled the Stone Chapel. Never since the time of the adoption of the Constitution had there been in that city a meeting of a political character animated with a deeper joy ; and no speaker could have been better fitted to give voice to the latent enthusiasm of the crowd. On no public occasion of his life was he so carried away by sympathy with the profound and passionate emotions which swelled in the popular mind. He gave full vent to his feelings, — with free and bold strokes painted the past degradation of Europe, — poured out the vial of indignant censure upon the ambitious despot who had made Christendom his prey, — reawakened the memory of the awful apprehensions with which men had watched his destructive career, — and when the audience were swept along in prospect to the verge of ruin, then he drew aside the dark cloud-curtain, and showed the benignant promises of peace spread out in mercy before the exhausted nations. As he uttered the words, “The oppressor is fallen and the world is free,” the pent-up feelings of the assembly burst forth in acclamation. It is said that the preacher paused, and calmly reminded his hearers that they were in the presence of God, to whose providential aid their humble gratitude was due.

This sermon was rather an extemporaneous overflow, than a studied address ; but it may be desirable to extract a few sentences. They prove that Mr. Channing drew encouragement from scenes which had turned many a fervent reformer into a timid conservative, and that he looked forward with confiding hope to better times.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix to a Discourse delivered in Boston at the Solemn Festival in Commemoration of the Goodness of God in delivering the Christian World from Military Despotism, June 15, 1814.

“From the events which we this day celebrate, we are especially to learn that most important lesson, to hold fast our confidence in God, and never to despair of the cause of human nature, however gloomy and threatening may be the prospects which spread before us. How many of us have yielded to criminal despondency! . . . . But now we are taught, as men, perhaps, never were taught before, to place an unwavering trust in Providence, to hope well for the world, to hold fast our principles, to cling to the cause of justice, truth, humanity, and to frown on guilt and oppression, however dark are the scenes around us, and however dangerous or deserted may seem the path of duty. . . . .

“A most solemn experiment has been making on society. The nations of Europe, which had all in a measure been corrupted by infidel principles, have been called to witness the effect of those principles on the character and happiness of nations and individuals. The experiment is now completed, and Europe and the world are satisfied. Never, I believe, was there a deeper conviction than at the present moment, that Christianity is most friendly to the peace, order, liberty, and prosperity of mankind, and that its subversion would be the ruin of whatever secures, adorns, and blesses social life. Europe, mangled, desolated Europe, now exclaims with one voice against the rule of atheism and infidelity, and flies for shelter and peace to the pure and mild principles of Christianity. Already the marks of an improved state of public sentiment may be discerned. We are at length permitted to anticipate the long lost and long desired blessing of general and permanent peace. A new era seems opening on the world. It is our hope that the storm which has shaken so many thrones will teach wisdom to rulers, will correct the arrogance of power, will awaken the great from selfish and sensual indolence, and give stability to governments by giving elevation of sentiment to those who administer them. It is our hope, that calamities so awful, deliverances so stupendous, will direct the minds of men to an almighty and righteous Providence, and inspire seriousness and gratitude, and a deeper attachment to the religion of Christ, that only refuge in calamity, that only sure pledge of unchanging felicity. Am I told that these anticipations are too ardent? Perhaps I have indulged the hopes of philanthropy, where experienced wisdom would have dictated melancholy predictions. I am not forgetful of the solemn uncertainty of futurity. But amidst all uncertainties which surround us, one truth we know, that God governs, and that his most holy and benevolent purposes will be accomplished.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Discourse at the Solemn Festival, &c., pp. 11-15.

The joy of this festival was sobered, however, by the reflection, that, though peace had settled upon Europe, the United States and Great Britain were still at war. New England was at this period utterly prostrated, her commerce paralyzed, her people bowed down with taxation, and to such an extent had dissatisfaction with the measures of the general government spread, that in December, 1814, delegates selected from her most eminent citizens assembled in convention at Hartford, Connecticut, with the view of securing their endangered rights, and consulting upon measures suitable to the exigencies of the time. Doubtless there were some who, in their disgust at the war, were inclined to urge a separation of the New England States from the Union; but it is now well understood that the object of that Convention was to open a vent to the popular excitement, to allay passion, to give a safe direction to the indignation of the community, and thus to avert the threatening danger of secession. Mr. Channing was among those who thought that everything should be sacrificed, except essential principles, for the preservation of the Nation. Then, as through life, he was devotedly attached to the Union, and though, as we have seen, opposed to the war with his whole soul, as utterly unjustifiable and inexpedient, he yet never allowed himself to despair. He would not abandon the hope, that the promise given to the world in this republic should be fulfilled. His views are well shown by a few extracts from a sermon preached to his people immediately after the news of the Treaty of Ghent arrived, and repeated on the day of thanksgiving for the peace.

“ I have said, that the single consideration that war is at an end is enough to fill our hearts with gratitude. But how should this gratitude be heightened, when we consider the state from which peace has rescued our country! The continuance of the war must, I fear, have destroyed us as a people. We had poured out our resources with a profusion which had emptied the treasury of the nation, and destroyed the credit of the government. Increasing taxes, imposed on an impoverished people, would have fomented discontent and insurrection. In this broken state of society, our best institutions would have been shaken to the foundation and subverted. The obligation of contracts would have been violated. General bankruptcy would have spread general distress, and destroyed the moral principles of the community. A spirit of insubordination, inflamed by hopeless suffering, would have annihilated the authority of law. The bonds of society would have been dissolved. These, at least, were the solemn forebodings



of our most reflecting men. Peace has saved us from these convulsions. . . . .

“Peace is snatching us, too, from the brink of civil dissensions. We seemed to be approaching a solemn crisis. To the evils of a foreign, might soon have been added the sorer evils of internal war. Thank God! the union of these States will at least be prolonged. The day which is to witness the dissolution of our political fabric is at least deferred. May we not trust that its great ends will in a measure be accomplished? Peace has placed the present rulers of this nation on a new ground. Without endangering their power, they may now consult the good of the whole country. Every motive incites them to encourage industry, enterprise, the development of resources, in every division of our wide land. Let every aid be given them in the establishment of a generous policy. It is very unimportant in whose hands is the power of the state, if it be but honorably and wisely employed. Most ardently do I hope that the men who have plunged this country into ruin may expiate their error by embracing, at this auspicious moment, a magnanimous course, and that their success may find its reward in the support of all parties into which we are unhappily divided. Prosperity such as our nation never yet experienced is brought within our reach. Nothing now is wanting but an impartial administration of the government, and a spirit of mutual forbearance among our citizens, to fulfil the bright anticipations which patriots of better days cherished for this favored people.

“May we not hope that the lessons of experience will not be lost, that a better spirit will pervade our communities, that we shall learn the value of a broad scheme of action, embracing at once the interests of all sections of this extended republic? May we not hope that the spirit of enterprise and improvement will now be unchecked, that new cities and towns will everywhere arise on our shores and in the wilderness, that arts and science will be widely diffused, that institutions sacred to humanity and virtue will meliorate the tone of social relations, that civil and religious liberty will be guarded and cherished as our best possession and most honorable distinction? Let us rejoice that we are once more to be bound in amity and profitable intercourse to every nation under heaven. God grant us perpetual peace! God grant us the honor of contributing by our commerce, by the light of our intelligence, by the example of a free, virtuous, and contented people, to the happiness and advancement of the human race!”

Thus liberal and magnanimous were Mr. Channing's political



sentiments at the close of the troubled years through which the humanity of Europe and America had been called to pass. But the sermon whence the above extracts have been made is interesting also as manifesting his views in relation to peace. The horrible cruelties by which Christendom had been blasted, as by lava-floods and ashes from the open crater of hell, had taught him, in common with thousands in all lands, to look upon war as the most awful and wasteful crime of which nations and men can be guilty. And he takes this occasion to deepen in his people's minds a conviction of the honorableness and blessedness of peace.

“I rejoice with you that the groans of the wounded and dying are no more to be heard on our shores, that the ocean is no longer to be stained with our own or hostile blood, that the skies are not again to grow red with the portentous glare of flaming towns, that we are no more to swell the crowd of widows and orphans, whose hopes have perished on the field of battle. I rejoice with you that the soldier is to return to his home from the depraving influences of a camp, and to earn subsistence by better means than slaughter and plunder. I rejoice with you that the resources of our country are no longer to be exhausted in carrying fire and death to neighboring provinces, that we are no longer to cast away our own blessings by attempting to destroy the blessings which God bestows on our brethren, no longer to ruin ourselves by seeking the ruin of another civilized and Christian nation. I know that to many war is a matter of course, that it seems to them a trifling affair to shed man's blood, to desolate fruitful regions, to scatter terror, want, and misery over once happy lands. But, thank God! I speak to some not thus hardened by savage customs and the calculations of inhuman policy, and who regard an unjust and unnecessary war as concentrating the guilt of multiplied murders. For one, I do rejoice that this war is to be terminated without the erection of a single monument of triumph upon the soil of this Commonwealth. What compensation could have been found in the most splendid victory for the loss of distinguished citizens, of men made noble by character and intellect, for the anguish of parents, widows, children, mourning the slain, for the wretchedness of bereaved, dispersed, impoverished families? It is not Christianity, certainly, that would teach us to forget the loss of friends in brutal exultation over the slaughter of enemies, — enemies who yet are men of the same nature with ourselves, children of the same Heavenly Father, commended by the same Redeemer to our goodwill. . . .

“ With what joy may we look on our venerable metropolis, — joy heightened by the solicitude with which we have watched the decline of her prosperity ! Had the war been but for a few years protracted, its ancient honors must have been humbled ; its inhabitants would have been dispersed, its schools shut up, its churches deserted, its institutions of piety and benevolence struck with decay. But now the fetters which have bound our energies are broken. Our silent streets are once more sounding with the roll and hum of business. Our grass-grown wharves once more are to swarm with loaded drays, and to be filled with heaps of merchandise. Our dismantled ships once again are to spread their wings, and bind us by ties of harmonious intercourse with every region of the earth. Once more our beloved metropolis is to become the home of honorable usefulness, the nursery of public spirit, knowledge, charity, and every institution which embellishes and exalts human nature. Wealth is again to flow in upon us through all the circulations of industry, not to feed luxurious indolence, but to give employment to the poor, to quicken ingenuity, to awaken the spirit of beneficence, to encourage science and the elegant arts, to nurture genius, to endow seats of learning, and, above all, to diffuse the knowledge and power of Christianity. My friends, I rejoice with you in these cheering prospects. Enter again on the labors which make the true glory of nations. God send you success ! ”

Thus earnestly bent was Mr. Channing to discourage the infernal custom of war, and especially to allay “ the proud, vaunting, irritable, contentious, aspiring temper, more disposed to honor courage than humanity, more restless the more it is successful, more devoted to party than to public weal, more open to the influence of parasites and intriguers than of wise and impartial men,” which he pronounces to be the bane of republics. But while thus longing for the era which he believed Christ had come to introduce, and which he was assured would in the fulness of time knit our long-sundered race into one, he was not then prepared to take the ground of condemning defensive war. Whether it is to be traced to natural temperament, to early training, to historical studies, to the habits of thought of the age, or to principle, it is certain that he had the spirit which, though frail in physical structure, and devoted to his pastoral office, would have prompted him to fight in defence of his country in an extreme emergency. Incapable of personal fear, chivalric in the tone of his character, and predisposed to the love of heroic deeds, he was nowise disposed to abandon the freedom of his native land to the mercies of an invading foe

without a struggle. Throughout this period, in private and from the pulpit, he maintained that it is the duty of the citizen to die, if need be, in protecting the religious and civil institutions of his nation and the inviolability of home. In this very discourse on Peace we find him saying:—

“We feared that the approaching spring would invite hostility to our very doors, that our families would be dispersed, and that the stillness of suspended business would be broken by the tumult of battle. Had this lot befallen us, I trust that we should have done our duty. We should have fought for the city of our fathers, for our altars and our firesides, with the spirit of freemen and of Christians, relying on the justice of the right of self-defence. But how should we bless God, that we have been saved from this sad necessity!”<sup>1</sup>

In unreserved adherence to the cause of peace, Mr. Channing was surpassed by his honored friend, the Rev. Noah Worcester, who was at this time residing in the neighborhood of Boston, and editing the *Christian Disciple*, and who may justly be called the father of the Peace movement in this country, by his “Solemn Review of the Custom of War.” From the first, however, Mr. Channing gave him the support of respectful sympathy and active co-operation. In the spring of 1816, he preached a discourse on War before the Convention of the Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts,<sup>2</sup> which was immediately printed and widely circulated, deepening in many minds the convictions already taught by the terrible history of the times. This discourse prepared the way for the formation of the Peace Society of Massachusetts, the first meeting of which was held in his study in the parsonage-house of the parish. From this society sprang all the kindred ones in our country, and its influence was felt abroad. Mr. Worcester was its corresponding secretary, and the editor of its periodical; but he relied in all his measures upon the advice of Mr. Channing, who was one of the society’s counsellors, and, according to the authority of the Rev. Dr. Pierce, “its life and soul.” For years he devoted himself to the work of extending its influence with unwavering zeal, as many of his papers of that period attest; and from among these we select two, as bearing upon important public questions. The first is the following memorial, which was prepared by him.

<sup>1</sup> See also “Duties of the Citizen in Times of Trial and Danger,” Works, Vol. V. pp. 411-422. One Volume Edition, pp. 679-688

<sup>2</sup> Works, Vol. III. pp. 29-58. One Volume Edition, pp. 642-653.



“To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled. The memorial of the members of the Peace Society of Massachusetts respectfully represents, —

“That the society which now solicits the attention of our national rulers was instituted for the single purpose of diffusing pacific and benevolent sentiments through this country, and through the world. Impressed with a deep and sorrowful conviction that the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of mercy, peace, and kind affection, is imperfectly understood; afflicted by the accumulated miseries and extensive desolations which war has lately spread over the fairest, most fruitful, and most enlightened regions of the earth; and at the same time encouraged by many decisive proofs of the revival of purer and more benevolent principles among Christian nations; your memorialists have formed this association with the solemn and deliberate purpose of co-operating with the philanthropists of every country in promoting the cause of peace and charity, in stripping war of its false glory, and in uniting different communities in the bonds of amity and mutual good-will. We are sensible, that, from the nature of our object, it is chiefly to be accomplished by a silent and gradual influence on the minds of men, and accordingly we have limited our operations to the circulation of useful treatises, in which the pacific spirit of our religion has been exhibited with clearness, and we hope with success. We believe, however, that the present moment demands a departure from our usual course, and we cherish the hope, that, by an application to the government under which we live, important service may be rendered to the cause of humanity, in which we are engaged.

“The present memorial is founded on two occurrences, which we hail as auspicious to the pacification of the world. The first occurrence to which we refer is the well-known and unprecedented union of several of the most illustrious powers of Europe, in declaring before ‘the universe their unwavering determination to adopt for the only rule of their conduct, both in the administration of their respective states, and in their political relations with every other government, the precepts of Christianity, the precepts of justice, of charity, and of peace.’

“The second occurrence to which we refer is the decided expression of pacific sentiments and anticipations in the conclusion of the late message of the President of the United States, in which his parting wishes for his country are expressed with tenderness and power. In this remarkable passage, worthy the chief magistrate of a Christian community, he expresses his conviction, that the



‘destined career of his country will exhibit a government which, whilst it refines its domestic code from every ingredient not congenial with the precepts of an enlightened age, and the sentiments of a virtuous people, will seek by appeals to reason, and by its liberal examples, to infuse into the law which governs the civilized world a spirit which may diminish the frequency, or circumscribe the calamities of war, and meliorate the social and benevolent relations of peace; a government, in a word, which may bespeak the noblest of all ambitions, that of promoting peace on earth and good-will to man.’

‘On the occurrences now stated your memorialists respectfully beg leave to found the following suggestions and solicitations.

‘First. We respectfully solicit, if it be consistent with the principles of the constitution, that the solemn profession of pacific principles, lately made by several distinguished sovereigns of Europe, may be met by corresponding professions on the part of our own government. Whilst we are sensible that a melancholy discordance has often existed between the language and the conduct of rulers, we still believe that the solemn assertion of great and important principles, by men of distinguished rank and influence, has a beneficial operation on society, by giving to these principles an increased authority over the consciences of those by whom they are professed; by reviving and diffusing a reverence for them in the community; and by thus exalting the standard of *public opinion*, that invisible sovereign, to whose power the most absolute prince is often compelled to bow, and to which the measures of a free government are entirely subjected. When we consider the support which is now derived to war from the perversion of public sentiment, we are desirous that our government should unite with the governments of Europe in a distinct and religious acknowledgment of those principles of peace and charity on which the prosperity of states and the happiness of families and individuals are alike suspended.

‘Secondly. We respectfully solicit that Congress will institute a deliberate inquiry, for the purpose of ascertaining the methods by which this government may exert on human affairs that happy influence which is anticipated by the President of the United States, the methods by which it ‘may infuse into the law which governs the civilized world a pacific spirit,’ ‘may diminish the frequency or circumscribe the calamities of war,’ and may express the ‘most noble of all ambitions, that of promoting peace on earth and good-will to man.’ We are persuaded that a government sincerely disposed to sustain the august and sublime character which is here described, of the pacificator of the world, will not want means of promoting its ends. We trust, that, under the persevering and well-directed

efforts of such a government, milder principles would be introduced into the conduct of national hostilities; that the reference of national controversies to an impartial umpire would gradually be established as the law of the Christian world; and that national compacts would be formed, for the express purpose of reducing the enormous and ruinous extent of military establishments, and of abolishing that outward splendor which has so long been thrown around war, and which has contributed so largely to corrupt the moral sentiments of mankind.

“When we represent to ourselves a Christian government sustaining this beneficent relation to the world, mediating between contending states, recommending peaceful methods of deciding the jarring claims of nations, laboring to strip war of its pernicious glare, and to diminish the number of those who are interested in its support, diffusing new and generous sentiments in regard to the mutual duties and obligations of different communities, and inculcating by its own example a frank and benevolent policy, and a sincere regard to the interests of the world,—when we represent to ourselves such a government, we want language to express our conceptions of the happy and magnificent results of its operations. It would form a new and illustrious era in human affairs, whilst, by the blessings which it would spread, and by the honor and confidence which it would enjoy, it would obtain a moral empire more enviable than the widest dominion ever founded on violence and crime.

“Loving our country with tenderness and zeal, accustomed to regard her as destined to an exalted rank and to great purposes, and desirous to behold in her institutions and policy increasing claims to our reverence and affection, we are solicitous that she should enter first on the career of glory which has now been described, and that all her connections with foreign states should be employed to diffuse the spirit of philanthropy, and to diminish the occasions and miseries of war. Of such a country we shall exult to be the children, and we pledge to it an attachment, veneration, and support which can be accorded only to a virtuous community.”

The second paper is a letter to Mr. Worcester, in which he refers to the war against the Seminoles, — a war that, undertaken, as it was, by a strong and professedly Christian and civilized nation against a scattered remnant of Indians, because they offered a retreat to slaves who had escaped from our oppression, and with an ulterior desire of robbing them of their lands, was certainly a concentration of all mean cruelties.

“The Seminole business has been disposed of by Congress, and

I have no wish that our society should enter the lists with government. But may not the subject be treated usefully in this way? Let us allow, for the sake of the argument, that the majority are right in construing the laws of war. Let us then state distinctly, and without any exaggeration, the acts of General Jackson, which they say are justified by these laws. May we not then bring home to men's minds the question, whether the time has not come for repealing such horrible laws. If war demands such regulations or outrages to accomplish its ends, can war too soon be abolished? We may say, that Congress have authorized all future commanders to exercise the same dreadful discretion in war. If so, is it not time to exert ourselves to prevent the recurrence of this infernal state of things? It seems to me, you may turn to good account the decision in Congress, without combating it. I wish this occasion to be made use of. The recital of the transactions of this 'justifiable war,' and comments upon it, may furnish matter for the number, — and I believe the public have not these facts before them in a connected series."

We have already seen the strong detestation with which Mr. Channing regarded one of the basest outrages of war, — if, indeed, any degree of more or less can be found in the guilt of its inhuman practices, — namely, *privateering*. But so much had he at heart the extinction of this barbarous custom, that it is but just to him, by a yet further quotation, to make his sentiments known. In the sermon on the peace, from which extracts have been given, he thus speaks: —

"May we not hope that mercantile transactions will no longer fly the day, and that the lip of perjury will be closed? Let us especially bless God that peace will sweep the legalized plunderer from the ocean, that privateering will no longer violate all the better feelings of our nature, that the ocean will be the pathway of upright and honorable enterprise instead of depraving warfare, and that we shall bear our part in dispensing over the earth the bounties of Providence."

In addition to the promotion of peace and a reform in penitentiary discipline and punishments, other philanthropic movements also engaged Mr. Channing's sympathy and aid. As early as 1816, he preached a discourse upon Temperance, which his society urgently requested him to print as a tract for general circulation. In the missionary enterprise, too, he was much interested, and brought the demands of this cause impressively before his people. Indeed, so much did he feel the importance of this



sublime effort to link the race of man into one whole, of which Christendom should be the heart,—by streams of piety, intelligence, and love sent out to circulate through the body of material intercourse which commerce was forming,—that, according to a declaration once made to a friend, he was on the point of breaking all his social ties and devoting himself to the work. Infirm health, however, and the pressure of the immediate duties in which he was engaged forbade. But through life he cherished a strong conviction of the high claims of missionary labors, while at the same time he was ever becoming more earnest to cleanse the fountain, by making the whole life of Christendom, national, commercial, domestic, individual, more truly Christian.

This desire of evangelizing mankind was closely connected with another movement, just rising into notice, which we now proceed to mention. The era of peace then dawning on the world interested Mr. Channing, by the opportunity which it afforded for uniting Christians more closely in common labors of beneficence. He saw everywhere, as he thought, the signs of a revival of a life of holiness and love. In his sermon at the “Solemn Festival” he had said:—

“This reaction in favor of religion and virtue will, we trust, continue and increase. Amidst the sufferings and privations of war, a generous spirit for *the diffusion of the Scriptures* has broken forth; and at this moment that sacred volume, which infidelity hoped to bury in forgetfulness with the mouldering records of ancient superstition, is more widely opened than in any former age to the nations of the earth.”

Thus are we brought to consider his connection with the world-wide movement for the distribution of the Bible. In 1811 he had delivered the first anniversary address before the Bible Society of Massachusetts, and from 1812 to 1820 he filled the most important office in the society, that of Chairman of the Executive Committee. The annual reports prepared by him were ample. They were regularly printed, and became an important auxiliary in promoting the objects of the society. A few extracts from these reports will show the position which this movement occupied in his regards.

1813. “No sincere Christian can need arguments to convince him that he is bound to contribute to the diffusion of Christianity through the world. This is a religion designed for all nations. Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to preach it to every creature under heaven, and shall *we* do nothing in aid of this great design? Is the gospel the appointed instrument of God for restoring the



world to purity and peace? Has the Son of God died to impart this invaluable blessing to our race? Have holy men of all ages toiled and suffered to spread it through the earth, and to perpetuate it to unborn generations; and shall *we* do nothing to extend the knowledge and power of the word of eternal life? . . . .

“In the present convulsed and disordered state of the world, it is most consoling and cheering to see so many Christians, of different countries and different denominations, forgetting their divisions, and uniting in one great effort for making known the Scriptures to every nation under heaven. Like the rainbow in a dark and stormy sky, this is a promise of a brighter and happier day. It is suited to carry forward our thoughts to that predicted period, when the knowledge of God shall fill the earth, and all nations be joined in love to their common Father and Redeemer, and to one another. We should rejoice that it is the design of Providence to effect this revolution by the instrumentality of Christians, and we should esteem it our privilege and happiness that we may bear a part in this inexpressibly sublime and merciful work of God.”

1815. “Another cause of congratulation remains to be mentioned. We refer to the encouraging intelligence from so many parts of this country and of Europe, of the multiplication, activity, and success of institutions for the distribution of the Scriptures. The spirit of Christian charity seems to gather strength from exertion. Never, perhaps, since the first age of Christianity, has a holier zeal existed than at the present moment for the moral and religious improvement of mankind. The British and Foreign Bible Society, that full and living fountain, is still sending forth its streams of truth and consolation; and distant nations, whom once no bond but interest connected, are now uniting in prayers and labors for the communication of the gospel to every creature under heaven.

“At such a period the excitements to Christian exertion are peculiarly strong. A voice seems to reach us from every part of Christendom, calling us to strengthen the hands and to share the honor of our brethren in extending that truth which has been the object of affection and hope to the pious and benevolent of past ages, and which we are assured is appointed to have free course and to be glorified, until it shall fill the earth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

1816. “Never before was so generous an impulse communicated to so many hearts. Never, since the first promulgation of

Christianity, has so sublime a spectacle been exhibited as that which we now witness of Christians in both hemispheres, separated by language, climate, manners, and oceans, forgetting their distinctions, and conspiring as brethren in the work of illuminating the world. Perhaps human history affords no example of such extensive co-operation for the good of mankind.

“From such institutions, founded by the most illustrious men, patronized by sovereigns, endowed by opulence, and inspired and sanctified by ardent love of God and mankind, are we not authorized to hope a melioration of the moral and religious condition of society? May we not anticipate a more wide and glorious manifestation of the power of Christianity on the hearts of men? May we not especially hope, that Christian nations, being thus united under the peaceful standard of the cross, and laboring and triumphing together in the cause of their common Lord, will drink more largely into his spirit, will exchange their animosities for love, and will shrink with horror from the thought of devoting each other to slaughter and desolation?”

Mr. Channing was interested, not only in extending the circulation of the Bible, but in promoting a rational and consistent interpretation of it. During this and the later portion of his life he gave much time and thought to the elevation of theological learning. This will appear more fully hereafter; but a few hints come here in place, which may indicate his progressive career of thought, and show his ready faithfulness to every call upon his energies. Immediately after the death of Buckminster, who for his age was undoubtedly the best read and most accomplished theological scholar in the country, and who had been chosen the first lecturer on the Dexter Foundation in the Divinity School at Cambridge, Mr. Channing was selected to fill that office. This was in 1812. He accepted the appointment, bought a portion of the very valuable library which his lamented friend had with great care and expense collected, sent abroad for various books from Germany and England, and began to make preparations for these new and difficult duties. He was pleased with the prospect of usefulness thus opened, though diffident of his fitness for the work. But he soon found that his health was entirely inadequate for the efforts to which he saw that a conscientious professor was summoned, who in the unsettled state of theological science undertook to be a guide, and in 1813 he resigned his trust. He retained a close relation, however, to the Divinity School, and became thenceforward one of its most active guardians, as is conclusively shown

in many letters and manuscripts. The careful meditation which he habitually turned upon an institution so important in every view to the well-being of the churches will appear by a few extracts from his private papers.<sup>1</sup>

“It is essential to a good institution that one spirit should pervade it, and that all its parts should harmonize. The balance between the intellect and the affections, or rather their joint action, should be most sedulously provided for. The Christian character, the spirit of Christ, as the *ultimate in religion*, should be presented in all its brightness. Whatever draws the mind from this is injurious. Zeal, self-denial, devotion to God and Humanity is the *essential*. The general course of instruction should tend to produce these. Speculations awakening scepticism, or undue exercise of intellect, should be avoided. Great *principles*, on which religious sentiment and practice rest, should be strongly, frequently offered to attention. The mind needs progress. Difficulty is its stimulus. But should it not be active chiefly in analyzing the true, in working on what is substantial, in building on a foundation, in developing the causes and connections of what is known to be real? To determine what proportion of time should be given to points which have mocked the efforts of the wisest men in all ages, and which are yet agitated and under debate, requires great judgment.”

“The *end* of the ministry should be set before them with great plainness, the *vastness of the change* which it is intended to work in society and individuals. They should be affected deeply with the condition of society, with the conviction that its state is exceedingly remote from that which Christianity is designed to bring in. Their minds should be quickened by the faith that a great change is *practicable*. Tameness grows from the thought of going on forever in the steps of the past. The attention of theological students should be turned more on the state of the world, less on abstract subjects; a lively interest in its progress should be aroused. They should feel as men set apart to produce a reform in the moral condition of mankind. The miseries of the *mass of men*, their toils, ignorance, sufferings, temptations, should touch them. Study should be seen to be a means only. How can a theological institution be made to give to its students the advantage, which students in law and medicine have, of seeing the actual application of principles, the profession illustrated in practice? Study conducted under the influence of sympathy with men would be vastly more efficient.”

<sup>1</sup> See also the Tract “On Increasing the Means of Theological Education,” &c., 1816, Works, Vol. V. pp. 363-371. One Volume Edition, pp. 279-282.



“The present course of training is too technical. It does not communicate a living spirit. A tone of feeling should pervade the institution, so that new students may at once imbibe it. Fervor should be a primary object. The intellect would gain force and largeness from such spiritual excitement. The first lesson to the students should be, that, in order to *communicate*, they must *receive* and be *filled with* the spirit of Christianity. Living Christianity should be the end. It is true that this spirit cannot be poured into them. They must be excited to seek it for themselves. But this must be presented as their most indispensable acquisition. The understanding of religion is exceedingly important; but moral and religious truth is best understood by the moral and religious culture of the soul. The true spirit of study is needed, an earnest desire to look into the deep things of religion from accordance of heart with its sublime realities.”

“Fixed meditation must be encouraged,—a deep pervading sense of the presence and perfection of God,—a wakeful spirit of prayer,—a strong conviction of the reality of the future life,—a devotion to the cause of Christ, identification of all their plans, purposes, and hopes with it, and a sense of the infinite importance of Christianity,—a reverence for the human soul, its greatness, worth, perils, prospects,—a vivid perception of the high spiritual purpose of our religion,—a distinct conception of the celestial virtue which it is designed to cherish,—a love deep and disinterested for elevation of soul and the zeal which personal experience of the power of religion gives,—courage, hardihood, and a martyr’s patience,—a correspondence to the most earnest spirit of the age;—these habits of mind and heart will form men of the sacred character which we need, and fit them to be sources of spiritual life to society.”

But it was not alone by his desire to give a pure, large, and practical tone to theological studies, that Mr. Channing was brought into active co-operation with the educational movements of the day. In 1813, he had been chosen a member of the Corporation of Harvard University, the duties of which office he continued to discharge for thirteen years. During this period he took an efficient part in all plans for the improvement of the course of instruction and discipline in the college. Voluminous notes remain to prove with what comprehensive and minute attention he made himself acquainted with the condition, wants, dangers, opportunities of the students, and with what discriminating sympathy he lent his aid to every proposed reform. An extract from these papers may be of interest, as showing his general views.

“Cannot religious and moral means of influence be made to enter more largely into the college system, and give it character? Religion should be professedly and conspicuously a main end of education. Piety should be held forth as an essential element of high character in every young man. Literary emulation cannot supply sufficient motive. We corrupt the young, and weaken their best principles, by exclusive use of so low a principle. Knowledge should always be presented as valuable only when inspired with and controlled by high principle. The mind should be turned to God as the fountain of intelligence, and all growth in wisdom should be seen to be an approach toward him, and a preparation for the fulfilment of his designs of good. Religion must be exhibited as the glory of our nature. An ingenuous, magnanimous, heroic form of piety must be inculcated, such as is fitted to win the generous hearts of youth. Religion still has a monkish, gloomy, formal, superstitious air. It is made a master, not a friend, in the eyes of the young. It is presented to them in the aspect of debasing terror, not of elevating and enlarging hope. They should be made to feel that it is the source of all lofty, honorable, manly sentiment. Its connection should be shown with harmonious and balanced character, with noble aspiration, self-devotedness, grand endeavor, courage, independence. There should be a religious teacher, who can present broad and generous views of religion in accordance with our whole nature, who can converse freely with the young men, visit them, attract them to him, and meet the deep wants which spring up in some minds at this season of life. . . .

“Religious character, profound moral feelings, a strong spirit of Christian piety and love, are all-important qualifications in the governors and instructors of college, so that they may be pervaded by an earnest conviction of the supreme importance of cultivating religion and virtue in their pupils, and may constantly show that religion is not a mechanical thing with them, not a means of discipline, but a grand and living reality. Without this, intellect will be too exclusively the object, and the great end of intellectual power and wealth will not be sufficiently brought into view. Virtue should be seen by the students to be the paramount object. No amount of talent or acquisition should be allowed to be a substitute for want of morality. Character should be regarded as the primary interest. There should be a kind but inflexible demand for purity and goodness. A student should be made to feel that every moral taint is disgraceful, base, abhorrent.”

The sympathy thus forever radiating to the interests of society at large did not exhaust Mr. Channing's love, which shone only

brighter and warmer, the nearer the sphere of its action to its central source. He was still a practical philanthropist. Physical debility had gradually warned him, it is true, to confine his personal activity within narrower limits than he had marked out in his earlier ministry, and the whole tendency of events had been to teach him, that his more peculiar and appropriate function was to be a discoverer and announcer of spiritual principles. But proof enough remains, that the benevolence which we have noticed in his spring-time had become the confirmed and unconscious habit of his summer. Thus writes a recipient of his bounty : —

“I ought to see the good hand of God continually stretched out, but some such special providences strike my mind with peculiar power. Were I to tell you my situation, your conviction would brighten, that the hearts of all men are in the hand of the Lord. For a number of days previous to receiving your letter, our barrel of meal and cruse were reduced to nothing, and I had called on a number for help, but could not obtain it. I borrowed a horse, and set out with a determination to procure some necessaries for my family, even if by increasing my debts. On looking into my desk, I found only three cents, which I took with me. In passing through the town, I stopped at the post-office to put in a letter, when the postmaster informed me that there was a letter there for me. I thought within myself, ‘How shall I pay for it with three cents?’ when, lo! a letter is handed me post-paid. ‘Generous friend!’ said I. I opened it, and was at first surprised by the bill. But after reflection, I said to my companion, ‘See what the Lord can do!’ Though the money gave us joy, when thinking of the unknown benefactor, whom God had enabled and disposed thus to contribute to unworthy strangers, yet the matter of the letter, distilled from the heart of the writer, gave us much higher joy. When paying my debts, which I was thus enabled to do, and procuring some necessaries, we could not refrain from mentioning this kind providence. I hope there was nothing wrong in this, as we read that what a certain woman did for Christ was to be told as a memorial of her.”

To every form of public charity Mr. Channing lent his ready counsel and encouragement; but it was chiefly within his own congregation that he was earnest to secure efficient union for purposes of mutual culture and co-operative usefulness. With this view, he, in 1817, addressed the following letter to the Committee of the Society in Federal Street.

“GENTLEMEN : — It has pleased a kind Providence to smile on



the religious society with which we are connected. The present ought to be gratefully acknowledged by us as a period of prosperity, and it seems to me a peculiarly proper one for accomplishing some valuable objects, by which both we and our children may be improved.

“I have for some time thought that a vestry-hall, or small building belonging to the society, and placed as near the church as may be, would be a great accommodation and benefit. The uses of it are as follows:—

“1. It would be a convenient place for *catechising* and instructing the children of the society,—a service for which the church furnishes very poor accommodations, especially in winter.

“2. It would give us a place for a *singing-school*, which is very much needed. Though our singing is very much improved, we all of us feel that it might be rendered a more interesting part of public worship. If we had a vestry attached to the church, I think that several persons might meet in it to receive instruction, who would not attend a public school. Besides, there might be weekly or monthly meetings of those of the society who are acquainted with singing, for purposes of improvement and gratification.

“3. It is known to the committee, I presume, that a *charity school* has been supported by contributions from our society and the New South Church, an admirable institution, and conducted in part by young ladies of our church. I am very desirous of giving perpetuity to this truly Christian establishment, and I conceive that this will be effected, if we provide a building in which the school may be kept.

“4. There is also a *Sunday school*, just commenced, for which a vestry would be highly desirable.

“5. If this plan is adopted, a place will be provided for *meetings of the church*, or of other parts of the society, for which the common place of worship is too large. The young ladies of the society have been accustomed to meet for the purpose of being instructed by their pastor. I should wish, if a suitable place were provided, to meet the young men also for the same purpose.

“6. I have a strong impression that a *collection of the most approved books* on moral and religious subjects would be a great and lasting benefit to our society. Such books, it is well known, have an important influence on the character, especially of the young, and yet they are far from being common among us. Perhaps the extent of the deficiency would surprise you. There are some families of our number, in which individuals may be found with a

strong taste for reading, but who cannot afford to purchase any but the most necessary books. In the families of the opulent, too, there are often but few books suited to illustrate the Scriptures, and to furnish religious instruction, and these few are often far from being the best. This deficiency is not to be supplied by circulating libraries, for they contain hardly anything but works of an amusing nature. Even where a disposition exists to purchase useful publications on moral and religious subjects, the wish is sometimes frustrated, either by mistakes as to the merits of books, or by the inability of obtaining the best in this country. Some of the most valuable works must be sent for to Europe, because the demand is not sufficient to justify booksellers in importing or reprinting them. These considerations persuade me that we cannot easily render greater service to the society than by laying the foundation of a library to which all classes shall have access. I believe that reading on religious subjects will be very much increased by it; that the attention of the young, which is now too often wasted on unprofitable books, will be drawn to the best authors; that a spirit of inquiry will be excited; that the Scriptures will be much better understood; that the minds of many will be enlarged; that Sunday will be spent with greater pleasure and profit; and that the instructions of the pulpit, aided by books which the preacher will recommend, will be more efficacious.

“These are important benefits, but these are not all. I would recommend, as a part of the plan, that the minister should be the librarian. The consequence of this will be, that his intercourse with all classes and ages of the society will be increased, and his knowledge of the books which they are reading will furnish useful topics of conversation and advice. This effect, a closer union between the minister and people, seems to me very valuable. I believe, too, that a valuable collection of books, to which all the members of the society may repair, as to a common fountain of instruction, will increase their interest in the society and be a bond of union to each other. May I add, that to the present, and especially to future ministers, this collection will be of great use. Our salaries do not permit us to furnish ourselves, but very imperfectly, with books; and the liberty of using freely such a library as I propose will enable us to unfold many subjects more fully than at present to our hearers.

“Your friend and pastor.”

In this project he had the cordial support of his wise and warm-hearted friend, the Hon. Judge Davis, who for so many years was

the deacon of his society and his invaluable counsellor, and the society liberally contributed to fulfil the plan. The building was finished and opened in the autumn of 1818, on which occasion he made an address, from which a few sentences may be selected.

“ This building has already done good by the exercise which it has given to your liberality and to many pure sentiments. It is now doing good ; for it is bringing us together as brethren, as members of the same Christian community. Yet more is it, we trust, to do good ; for we have reared it for the advancement of Christianity, a religion which meets all our wants, sorrows, guilt, and fear, — which opens its arms to infancy, and directs the ardent mind of youth to its Creator, which furnishes to our riper years motives to uprightness, which goes with us to the grave, and strengthens the sight to discern a brighter world beyond.

“ One leading object of this building was, to provide for the religious instruction of children. I need not observe to you, that in our public services our children hear much which they cannot understand, and that they need more simple and direct instruction. If strength shall be given me, I shall engage in this work, I hope, with more earnestness than I have been able to do, though not without diffidence. The task is not as easy a one as many suppose. It is easier to convey knowledge to minds as ripe as our own, than to adapt ourselves to an age of which we preserve only indistinct recollections. There is, indeed, no labor in teaching children to repeat words ; but to proportion our communications to their capacities, to bring the invisible God near to them, to excite them to thought, to touch their hearts, — these are objects which have not sufficiently been proposed in education, and we must advance towards them by a path of our own discovery. In this part of my duty, I hope that some of you will have the leisure and disposition to assist. I could wish that we might consider the religious education of the children of the society a common end, to be talked of when we meet, and to be advanced by each other's observations and experiments. I dare not pledge myself for great exertion, but, if health permit, I should delight in making the trial, how far parochial may aid domestic instruction, in saving children from temptations, imbuing them with Christian principle, and, while they are yet tender and unfettered by habit, confirming their choice of a pious and virtuous life.

“ It is also my hope to meet here the ladies of the society whom I have been accustomed to assemble for the study of the Scriptures ; and nothing would gratify me more than to meet occasionally the



young men for free conversation, or more regular instruction, on the subject of religion."

The meetings of ladies which are here referred to had been held by Mr. Channing for many years. One who was at this period his parishioner, and thenceforward to the end of his life an intimate and valued friend, Mrs. George Lee,<sup>1</sup> thus records her recollections of them:—

"These meetings were usually held at the house of Mrs. Codman. They were intended for religious instruction and for awakening a just comprehension of religious duty. Mr. Channing opened the services by reading portions of the New Testament, which he commented upon in his lucid manner, throwing light upon obscure passages, and rousing his hearers' minds to their highest capacity of reflection. His observations were eminently fitted to inspire a devotional feeling, and shed abroad a spirit of prayer. The subjects selected were those which the whole tenor of his life and preaching inculcated, — unreserved love of our Heavenly Father, uncompromising obedience to his will, the surrender of the whole soul to his service, the unspeakable benefits received through the mission of his Son, the wisdom as well as beauty of holiness. It was by his fervent and exalted manner, that he prepared his auditors for the closing prayer; and when he arose, — for he addressed us seated, — and said with his solemn and impressive voice, 'Let us pray,' I am sure there was not a wandering heart amongst us.

"The meeting might be called one for social worship, a gathering round a domestic altar. The effect could not but be salutary. A few hours were redeemed from the cares and anxieties, the frivolities and conventional forms of life, and the mind called home and directed to its highest destination. The number of worshippers varied; but I should think there were usually fifty or more present. The meeting was designed for the females of his own society, though others often requested the privilege of attending. I am happy to recall those pleasant days, and cannot be grateful enough that to the last I enjoyed the conversation of our beloved friend, and felt the influence of his life. Can I ever forget his calm, impressive tone?"

Thus it appears that Mr. Channing was still an active pastor. But it was chiefly through his sermons that he exerted influence. His power in the pulpit had from the first been constantly increasing, and his full congregation was now often crowded by strangers,

<sup>1</sup> Author of "Three Experiments of Living," "The Huguenots in France and America," &c.

who gathered from various motives to hear one who was everywhere recognized as the most eloquent and effective preacher in Boston. His discourses occasioned by the great political crisis through which the country had been called to pass, from 1812 onwards, — the bold, original, and discriminating address on war in 1816, — his able publications in the Unitarian controversy, and especially his Baltimore sermon, delivered in 1819, of which several editions were at once printed, and which was circulated through the length and breadth of the land, — and, finally, the masterly Dudleian Lecture in 1821, in which so succinctly and glowingly he presented the evidences of Revealed Religion, — had gradually established his position in the very first rank of the thinkers and scholars of the country; and at this time he was experiencing the incentives and temptations of celebrity. That he was painfully conscious of the ensnaring power of the ambition which a position of such eminence naturally engenders, appears from the care with which in his journals he guards himself against its charms and strives to maintain the purest singleness of purpose. His private papers of this whole period are most affecting from their moral beauty; but the reader turns his eye away from secrets which a mortal scarcely whispers to his own heart, and a feeling comes over him of the awful sanctity of that temple of the soul whereinto God's guardian angels only have befitting innocence to enter. It is enough to say, that conscience sat ever vigilant at the portal of his heart, like a father confessor listening to hear the faintest breathings of remorse, to prescribe the needed penance, to give the blessed sign and word of absolution.

• Yet from the piles of these documents, in which the writer's inmost experience is laid bare, as if he stood transparent in the very light of the all-penetrating eye, it seems but right to select a few of the less personal expressions of feeling and thought; for there is no other way of showing the essential character of the man. The most striking intellectual peculiarity of these papers is their minute exhaustive analysis, — their spirit is devoutness. The writer takes up some disposition of which he is conscious, some branch of duty, some relation in life, some grand principle, some reality, and, holding it tenaciously before him, not only for a day or week, but, as dates clearly prove, for months and years, slowly elaborates a consistent and complete view. It is very interesting to compare the hints scattered in these loose sheets with the compact, finished form in which many of the thoughts finally appeared in the author's published works. One gains thereby some insight of the mode whereby in the moral as in the natural world gems are

formed, and precious metals deposited in the rocks. The profound conscientiousness, patience, earnest solemnity, concentrated strength, unity, of this good man thus become apparent; it is seen how weighty to his own mind was the meaning of his words, how sedulously he simplified the statement of his opinions, how through much struggle he attained to calm, even, equable utterance, how carefully he reserved what was most fresh, brilliant, novel, until assured of its substantial truth, — from what depth of experience he drew. From beginning to end, they mark the progress by which an earth-born creature is through willing faith transfigured into an image, faint though it be, of divine disinterestedness. In the fragments which we select, suggestions as to the ministerial profession, the special calls of the times, his relations to his people, and his own peculiar duties, are so intermingled, that it would be useless to attempt to cast them anew into any formal mould. Evidently, to his own mind, his outward life and his inward thoughts were one.

“ I should desire that knowledge which will conduce most to the salvation of my people. This sentiment is most favorable to enlarged views, and free and vigorous action of mind. A general loftiness of sentiment, independence on men, consciousness of good intentions, self-oblivion in great objects, clear views of futurity, thoughts of the blessed companionship with saints and angels, trust in God, as the friend of truth and virtue, — these are the states of mind in which I should live.”

“ Let me be very definite in the ends which I propose, when I converse, write, or preach, and let me keep them in view, and press forward to them. Let me appeal to God for the truth and importance of every sentiment, and for my own sincere conviction, and my desire to impress it. Let me write with prayer, as on my knees, sensible of my dependence on the Divine Spirit for every good exercise, every right aim, every disinterested affection. Let me be satisfied with plain, serious, important truth, expressed perspicuously.”

“ Let me purpose, before I begin to write, some definite, serious impression which I wish to make, and pray for direction and sincerity. Let me lead a whole life of religion, humility, faith, devotion; for unless there be this general frame of character, no particular acts will be religious in spirit. The heart is always active, and builds up unawares the discourse of the speaker, turns his thoughts, fashions his expression. Let me in writing and reviewing hold intercourse with God, refer every word to his approbation, and consider whether I bear his message.”



“Let me cultivate love, be continually setting before my mind views which will lead to disinterestedness, be continually engaged in some definite benevolent object. Let me labor through the week to keep alive a devotional sentiment, which may thus show itself unforced, and communicate itself to others on the Sabbath.”

“Is my preaching attended with encouraging results? Do my people come to hear me to be pleased, or to be made better? Are they not rather attached to the man, than to the cause? Let me be more plain, urgent, importunate, tender. I am more and more sensible to the importance of an earnest, unaffected manner. I should lead my hearers home to their own hearts and lives, and preach searching sermons. I am not plain and forcible enough. I appeal too much to the ingenuous feelings. Men need also solemn, stern warnings. Religion must be presented to them as the end of life, the grand reality. Let me begin to write early enough in the week, so that I may throw my whole soul into the close of my sermons. My work should be all in all. I should visit my people more freely, become a member of their families, know them, be known by them, win their confidence. The sight of every parishioner, and indeed of every human being, should be accompanied with the thought of the grandeur of a human soul, of the beauty, excellence, happiness, to which every soul may attain, and the degradation and misery into which it may fall.”

“A minister should feel that he is dispensing the truths of a religion introduced by a long line of prophets, sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ, designed to conduct men to all glory and excellence, to introduce a stupendous change in human affairs, to fill earth with the happiness of heaven. The idea of this grand change should be ever present to him. Nothing low should content him. To inspire elevated, disinterested piety should be his aim. He should *fill* his mind with the thought that man is destined to become the glorious image of God. He should live in a region of hope, he is to be distinguished by grandeur of aim, he should rise above human opinion and every influence which now bows down the faculties with solicitude, despondency, agitation, fear. Zeal to advance the great felicity to which Christ came to raise all men should animate him forever. He should never think of rest, till this sublime end is accomplished. His whole intercourse should tend to exalt and animate men’s conceptions and desires. All his influence should terminate in this *central* point, — that Christ came to call us to a true regeneration, to a celestial virtue; that much, very much, is to be sought, is to be gained. A diffusive philanthropy should be his habitual temper. He should view his people

as a part of mankind specially intrusted to him, whom he is to arouse to co-operation in the great common work of promoting holiness and happiness throughout the earth. He must be warm, bold, efficient. The ends before him are infinite."

"Good preaching never enraptures an audience by beauties of style, elocution, or gesture. An easy, unbalanced, unlabored style should be the common mode of expression. This will give relief and prominence to more important parts, and insure variety. Composition should resemble nature. Dazzling objects soon fatigue the eye. Simple truth, in plain, perspicuous words, should form the body of the discourse, and all appeals of peculiarly solemnizing, melting, invigorating character should be introduced in the way of transition. By simple truth, staleness and tameness are not meant, for there should always be richness of thought. A sermon should never be a barren sand-level of commonplaces, but a fresh, fertile field, verdant and well watered. In style, as in music, there should be a key, which should change with the topic. Let clearness, dignity, unstrained vigor, elevation without turgidness, purity without primness, pathos without whining, characterize my style. Let me study to be filled with the spirit of the truth I am to utter, and I shall speak as I ought. A slow, distinct, and rather low enunciation should form the ground of delivery. It is better to require exertion on the part of the hearer, than to stun him with clamor."

"That is the best preaching, which leads the audience to lose sight of the speaker in the sublimity of his themes, when the words and tones are forgotten, and the minds of all are awakened to the contemplation of grand realities. I wish to bring the kingdom of heaven near to men, to persuade them to lead devoted, pure, loving lives. How shall I thus persuade them? Not by violence, irritation, self-exaltation, enthusiasm, excess, — not by prejudicing my hearers against me as a fanatic, and exciting their opposition, — but by manifesting a calm, kind, humble, sincere, dispassionate state of heart, with clear views and direct purposes. Let me preach the whole truth plainly, earnestly, tenderly, but with self-possession. We should labor to undeceive men, who are deluded by self-love and by fashion, satisfied by a hollow outside, decency of manners, ensnared by subtle temptations, and make them feel to the quick the need of a radical change, of integrity, purity, heavenly-mindedness. To do this, we must have the power to search the heart. We must be at once full of feeling, argumentative, comprehensive, particular. I ought to make every sermon practical by applying it to my own state in a continuous process of self-examination. *Permanent impression* is the test of good preaching. Hence

individuality, united with large principles, is an essential requisite in a good sermon. Every hearer should feel that he is immediately interested in the truths which are taught, that then and there they apply directly to him."

"That which is often called *pulpit eloquence* is a mode of address calculated chiefly to warm the imagination and agitate the passions. But in preaching, the true end is not so much to produce some sudden effect, as to make impressions which will abide through life, to plant seeds which shall grow and ripen forever. An impulse communicated to a popular assembly is short-lived. No *change of character* is produced by it. A preacher who habitually adopts this so-called eloquent manner may be a boast to his people and a wonder to strangers, but his real influence will be constantly lessening. He will be heard, admired, criticised, as an actor is, for the excitement he causes. And as he has not the advantage of a political declaimer, who can find ready stimulants for his audience in the national and local topic of the day, he will be forced to seek his charm in brilliant ornament and striking delivery, and will finally fall into verbosity, affectation, puerility, mysticism, extravagance. On the other hand, a preacher who wishes to interest his people for life must attract and fasten their regards upon the sacred subjects which he brings before them, and not upon his manner. He must awaken in them a love of truth, of religious instruction, of spiritual improvement, of holiness. Then will their attention be unwearied and ever deepening. A minister who is listened to, at the very time when he has conspicuous defects in style and elocution, has a much fairer prospect of usefulness than many a brilliant orator, whom a congregation first hear with rapture, and then grow cold to. Attention, deep attention, is what is wanted in an audience; and the mode to excite it and keep it alive is to present great truths which fill their minds, and motives which inwardly prompt them to vigorous and constant action. A minister must himself, then, be engaged, alive, absorbed in great interests, profoundly convinced of the infinite importance of receiving Divine truth, and manifesting it in his whole life."

"I must urge that repentance which consists in realizing the entire obligation of the law of right, in feeling bound to render perfect obedience, in regarding all sin as inexcusable, in longing for a total deliverance from evil. Men must be made to abhor their sins, to be prostrated before the long-suffering benignity of God, to be humbled, melted, filled with shame at the thought of disobeying such an infinitely wise as well as merciful Being. It is important to set forth the law of God in all its sanctity, largeness,



strictness, beauty, glory. It must be shown that the only satisfaction, peace, joy, is in being conformed by Divine love to the image of God. This must be urged until men see and feel that all selfishness is a miserable, hopeless exile, till they love spiritual life as it is in God and angels, as the highest good, to be joyfully chosen above all things."

"When I propose a subject for a discourse, the question should be, How can I bring my mind into the state most favorable to clear understanding, deep impression, strong representation of it? But I should not labor while I write, nor work myself up into a fever inconsistent with calm, humble dependence upon the Divine Spirit, and thoughtful, affectionate regard for those whom I am to address. There should be nothing strained or excessive, while seeking to place a subject in a light which will bring out new connections, and array it in attractive beauty. My whole mode of life should be a preparation for treating interesting themes in a fresh and animating way. In choosing a topic, I should first view it in its connections, relations, position, as compared with other truths. I should then let it expand fully in my mind into all its branches and applications. From among these I should select the views most suited to the special end I have before me. Next, I should consider carefully the best method of arrangement; and in treating every head, my mind should be active to unfold the general thoughts involved in it in their relations to the main subject of the discourse. Every passage should be tested by its tendency to advance the end proposed. During the whole composition, I should be elevated by the greatness of truth, an ardent love of excellence, an active desire for the purity and salvation of man, a glowing piety, a conscious communion with God."

"In the regular course of the ministry, we have most to fear from mechanical sluggishness. Monotonous tameness is the sand-bar on which so many are stranded. The safety is in keeping the heart ever alive. The preacher must draw from his own full experience; he must never write as if writing was his business. The wish to be correct and elegant should never enter his thoughts. He has to penetrate men with great convictions. The Greeks wrote well, because the whole world of thought lay fresh and untouched before them. This should teach us not to form ourselves on models, not to use materials furnished by others, but to be enterprising in the exercise of our own minds, and in exploring the great sources of truth, — nature, man, revelation. There is a free, bold, vigorous tone of thought, the easy action of a generous spirit, which is most desirable for every one to attain. All timidity of character, exces-

sive accuracy, anxious observance of rules, desire to finish minute parts, love of glitter and polish, fondness of conceits, is fatal to this freedom. It is the natural movement of a sincere, ardent, independent mind. The preacher should never give his hearers leisure to admire; he should never permit them to doze. He should write with the ardor of strong conviction, trust himself to the flow of thoughts, and be unconstrained and unreserved."

"True eloquence springs from living perception of the truth, and from intimate communion with the hearts of men. We must not lean on opinion, must not fear the judgment of hearers. Dependence upon an audience is a charmed circle, which represses all generous thought. Love of truth sets the writer free. The vigorous character of composition depends on the decision with which the mind grasps a truth. Eloquence is to be attained by the full culture, the general enriching, of the heart and mind. An enlarged spirit, which has reached grand convictions, will utter itself with a commanding style. There is never true eloquence, except when great principles and sentiments have entered into the substance of the soul, and become incorporated with the whole being. The way to be eloquent is to be possessed with truth. Good writing, good speaking, is that which grows directly from the heart, when expression becomes necessary from the fulness of the soul, when religion is a living principle within us, and the discourse is the spontaneous putting forth of this germinating seed. What is wanted is *genuine feeling, inward life*."

"My object should be, to contribute to that great work which God is promoting in the world. Every faithful effort has its influence. Let me never despair. Local, temporary objects should be comparatively unimportant. An expanded interest in humanity should govern me. I am connected with the church universal, with all future ages; and let no devotion to a party lead me for an instant to overlook its defects, or to forget the high claims of truth and right. The religion which is to open heaven in the human heart is as far away from heated bigotry, as from the lowness of a worldly temper. To breathe warmth into the cold, generous piety into the abject and servile, honorable views of God and man into the dejected, timid, and superstitious, should be my end. Let me live to exhibit the paternal character of God, the quickening influence of his spirit, his willingness to raise us to perfection, the glorious capacities and destination of man, the filial nature of religion, the beauty of benevolence, of self-denial and suffering in a generous cause, the union formed by a spirit of humanity between God and the soul, the joy of high moral sentiment, the possibility of attain-

ing to sublime greatness of character and habitual largeness of sentiment and action. Men are to be regenerated, not so much by a sense of the blessedness of goodness in the abstract, as by coming to understand that disinterestedness, that union with God and his whole spiritual family, in which goodness consists. The glory and nobleness of a soul self-surrendered to God, joined to him in purposes of beneficence, swallowed up in a pure, overflowing love, must be made manifest."

"It is essential in a minister, that his mind should be habitually under religious influences, so that his whole character and life shall diffuse an animating spiritual power. All should feel that his soul is in communion with God, that he lives under the guidance of His *will*, and by His spiritual influences. He should unite with devotional fervor an harmonious, full development of human nature. His end is to flash upon the dormant minds of men a consciousness of the Divine life, to touch the spring of spiritual affection. He should enable them to see how religion works within his own soul, he should make his own mind visible, and show religious truth, not abstractly, but warm and living, clothed with the light and glow of his own conscious experience. Let the perfection of the Christian life, its high, holy, humane spirit, its communion with God, its elevation, disinterestedness, hope, joy, be my habitual state, so that in all my thoughts, actions, studies, I may be a guide to my people."

"Unity of impression should be an object to a minister. He should not undo one day the work of another. All his instructions should have a common bearing, and this implies enlarged views of religion. He must not waste the zeal of men on points of secondary importance. His efforts should be systematic, not desultory, and be governed, not by sudden impressions, but by extensive plans. His whole life and influence should have one tendency. Nothing demands such lucidness, breadth, depth, completeness, harmony of exposition, as the religious life. Foundations must be planted firmly. Seeds of great, enduring, ever-growing principles must be sown. People are injured and made dull and disproportioned by laying excessive stress upon every point. Preaching should call into action the whole spiritual being of hearers. It should not address one faculty only, but manifest religion to the reason, conscience, imagination, heart. A minister should strive to unfold harmoniously the souls of his people, just as he sees Providence unfold the body in a plant or animal. His whole inward life should be brought into activity. His preaching and intercourse with men should be the result of a joint and vigorous co-operation



of all his spiritual powers, quickened by a Divine influence. To excite to *universal growth* should be his end."

"In proportion to the difficulty of the times should be my desire to exhibit solemn and ennobling views. The long religious torpor which has rested on the world has prepared men for an opposite excess. Religious sensibility is an essential element in man, and, however smothered for a time, it must and will break forth again with power. Is it not the error of those who oppose the prevalent systems of Orthodoxy, that they do not substitute interesting views for those which they would remove? They insist that Christ came to restore human nature, that moral good is his end. But do they present this end in its dignity and grandeur? Must we not strongly conceive and represent the glorious change which he came to bring in men and nations? A *divine life*, a *heavenly life*, this is the end for which he came. In exhibiting religion as this *universal regeneration of all human interests*, the present degradation of society must be exposed. Here is the need of earnest remonstrance. Great explicitness, fearlessness, is demanded. Jesus Christ must be taken as the standard and rule; the highest, purest principles of his religion must be plainly proposed as the guide to individual and social practice. The world waits for a new exhibition of Christianity in all its sublime encouragements, its solemn warnings, its glorious assurances. With what entire devotedness should I consecrate myself to this great end!"

"Let it be my object to conceive and express the gospel *worthily*, in life and word to exhibit the religion of Christ in its purity, its sublimity, its divine beauty. Let it be my desire to raise men's thoughts to the *great end* of the being and mission of Christ, to show the exalted, perfected, heavenly state of man which he came to introduce, to exhibit the glorious relations into which he desires to bring us. Let it be my aim to raise to this lofty height the moral sensibility, the ambition, the aspirations, the generosity of men, to animate them to see brightly and vividly this grand destiny which opens before them, to carry their thoughts forward to the future greatness of virtuous humanity, to shed the light of heaven on their nature and present state. The end to be set before them is a thirst for nearness to God, love of him, bright views of him, sympathy with him, desire of his friendship, disinterested self-surrender to his designs, heavenly goodness, heavenly joy, conformity to the spirit of his beloved Son, — a perfect oneness, in a word, with the Heavenly Father. May not this exhibition of Christianity, as an all-ennobling system of Divine influences, be the *one great end* to which my life and labors may tend?"

“Let us not linger at the threshold of Christianity; conduct us into its inmost depths of life. Help us to break through the obstacles, the doubts, despondency, lethargy, weakness, which hinder us. Open in us an unquenchable aspiration for truth and virtue. Give us a spirit of rational, filial, strong, unreserved, triumphant, glad obedience. Give us perfect confidence in Thee, whose laws are the dictates of fatherly wisdom and love, and who dost delight in the purity and glory of thy children. Dispose us to see thy goodness everywhere, not only when descending upon us, but when diffused abroad, so that we may discern the love which pervades the universe and quickens all spirits.

“Make us sensible of our inward wants, indigence, destitution, weakness. Lay open to us our corrupt motives. Expose to us our hidden vices in all their deformity. Teach us to look steadily into ourselves, till we shall see with something of thine own abhorrence every evil affection. Lead us away from false resources to a sure dependence on thy perfect will, and may this reign supreme within us. Help us to look through the disguises of self-love, to judge ourselves truly, to anticipate the revelations of the last day; and let not this knowledge of our deficiencies and deformities fill us with dejection, but rather endear to us thy mercy, and lead us to thy grace, while rousing us to vigilance and to firm and faithful conflict with every irregular desire.

“Dispose us to a sincere sympathy with all men, not only to see extraordinary excellence with joy, but to take pleasure in the humblest improvements of our fellow-creatures, in the beginning of everlasting life within them. Incline us to respect the feelings of others, so that we may never wound, nor tempt, nor depress a human being. May we understand the sublime heights of benevolence to which we are called by the gospel, and aim at perfection in all social relations. Assist us to express with power and unaffected simplicity the beauty of virtue, so that we may attract all around us to the heavenly life. Inspire us with an active, diffusive beneficence, and may we have the witnesses of our good-will in the improved virtues and happiness of our friends, associates, and all within the sphere of our influence. Affect our hearts with the loveliness, beauty, and joy of that mild, condescending, affectionate spirit which our Master breathed, and may we imbibe it till our lives overflow with usefulness and bounty. Assist us in enlarging our benevolence, in diffusing our affections, so that we may embrace in kind regards all beings capable of happiness; and give us wisdom to design and vigor to execute noble and extensive schemes of public and private good. May we learn to lose ourselves in disinter-

ested services from generous ardor, and to delight in imitating Thee, and in promoting the great ends of thy providence and the blessedness of creation.

“We pray for the *fulness of thy spirit*. We beseech Thee to animate with new life our languid affections. Give us the fervor of devotion, the glow of philanthropy. Awaken us to a holy zeal, a joy in thy service, a promptness to do and to suffer whatever thou dost appoint. May the labors of life become acts of religion and offerings to Thee, by the conscientiousness, purity of motive, and devotedness to thy will of perfect good, from which they are performed. May our sense of thy presence be ever more clear, our conceptions of thy character more bright, our gratitude more tender, our love of exalted virtue more generous, our good-will more overflowing. May a Divine life be ever growing within us.”

This series of autobiographical papers cannot be more satisfactorily closed than by the following extracts from a discourse, in which he thus sums up the results of his ministerial experience.

May 26, 1822. “In reviewing my preaching, I cannot hope that I have taught you truth unmixed with error, but I have a calm and cheerful conviction that I have taught the great and essential principles of our religion. I have particularly labored to set before you a just view of God’s all-benignant character, as the spring and motive of filial love and affectionate obedience. In regard to Jesus Christ, I have continually labored to impress you with the proofs of his Divine mission, the venerableness and loveliness of his spirit, the excellence of his religion, the benevolent purposes of his life and death, and your personal need of the aids which his gospel of grace and mercy gives. . . .

“In regard to the person or rank of Christ, you well know that a controversy has prevailed during my ministry, in which every minister has been compelled to take a part. My views on this subject have varied but little since my first connection with you, and have been made known to you with entire frankness. The great fundamental principle of Christian belief is, that Jesus Christ was anointed, sent, commissioned by God, that he derived all his authority and offices and power from God, so that God who sent him is always to be adored as the first cause, the original, of whatever Christ communicates, and is to be our ultimate hope and confidence. I know nothing which appears to be more plainly a departure from this fundamental principle of Christian belief than the doctrine that Christ is God himself, equally entitled with the Father who sent him to the glory of originating our redemption,



equally saving us by his own underived, infinite power. To teach this is to resist the current of Scripture language and Scripture precepts, to withstand Christ's great purpose, which was to glorify his Father, and to shake the fundamental principle of natural as well as revealed religion, the *Unity of God*.

“My ministry on this point I look back upon with unmixed pleasure; nor have I any consciousness of having thus degraded Jesus Christ. His glory consists in the love with which God regarded him, in the offices with which God has invested him, in the likeness which he bears to God's purity and goodness, — not in being God himself; and they are the last to consult Christ's glory, who, instead of making him the brightest representative and the most exalted minister of his Father, throw a mist and doubtfulness over his whole nature, by making him the same being with his Father. I make these remarks with no disposition to bring reproach on any class of Christians; for I would not breathe a single word which might even seem to be unkind. But the circumstances of my ministry compel me, in reviewing it, to refer to the controversy which has shaken this church, and in which I have been charged with conducting my people into ruinous error. That I have not erred I ought not to affirm with the decision and confidence too common in controversy, and therefore I would only say that I have inquired earnestly, and that inquiry has given me a calm, stable conviction of the great principle, that Jesus Christ is a distinct being from God, a derived, dependent being, not the self-existent and infinite Creator.

“Still, I have not been accustomed to preach Christ *as a mere man*. I have spoken of him as a peculiar being. He existed in a state of glory before his birth. Nor was his agency for our salvation confined to his teaching, and example, and suffering, and resurrection, while on the earth; but he is now a glorified, powerful agent in human affairs, our friend, benefactor, intercessor, and strengthener, and hereafter he will be our judge. These views I have urged, not because the mere belief of them is to save, but because they have seemed to me fitted to create a more earnest, affectionate, reverent, and obedient regard to Jesus Christ, — such a regard as will lead us to form ourselves upon the model of his precepts and example. This, this is the essential point, and he who is faithful here has a saving faith, be his views of Jesus whatever they may. The greatest and most dangerous error of the age is the substitution of opinion, speculation, controversy, of noise and bustle about religion, for the *practice* of Christ's precepts, especially of those precepts which peculiarly characterize his religion, — filial

love towards God, and self-denying, all-forgiving, disinterested, mild, humble, patient charity towards men. This *love*, this charity, — which is *the end* of the Christian commandment, which is greater than faith and hope, which is the very spirit of Christ, which is *God dwelling in us*, — I have made supreme in my ministry; and I trust that I have not labored wholly in vain. . . .

“What I deplore in the state of this society and of the community is a languid, depressed tone of religious feeling, and the want of decision, energy, strong purpose, in applying Christianity to conduct. Religion slumbers under the embers, when it should be a quickening flame. It is my consolation, that on this topic I have preached plainly, faithfully, and not without earnestness, admonishing you of the perils of a state of society like ours, where a partial Christianity is enjoined by public sentiment and habit, and of course is easily adopted, whilst the *spirit* of Christianity is sadly wanting.”

It will be readily understood that in the private papers, from which the foregoing extracts have been made, are many passages of deeper interest than any which we have felt at liberty to publish; and it is chiefly the number, variety, minuteness, long continuance, of his observations upon his duty and his own character, which reveal Mr. Channing's conscientiousness. But probably even these specimens will serve to show with what wakeful hospitality he greeted all new suggestions, which came like strangers to his tent-door, and how he made them his familiar guests, conversed with them, listened humbly to their message, and found by glad experience that he had thus entertained angels unawares. More and more the sublime opportunities of the age were opening upon him, and he gave himself with ever fresher zeal to the work of advancing what he saw to be a new era of humanity.

His usefulness among his own people, and in his immediate community, as well as his wide celebrity, suggested at this time to a small company of Unitarians in New York the thought of inviting Mr. Channing to remove to that city. On his return from Baltimore, in 1819, he had preached to them, and communicated an impulse which had continued to grow, and now, having formed themselves into the “First Congregational Society of the City of New York,” they wrote to him in 1820, saying, “We are convinced that your aid is indispensably necessary to the rapid and permanent success of the cause of uncorrupted Christianity in this quarter of the Union,” and urging him, if possible, to enter upon this new field of labor. “The church which you have so essentially contributed to found,” they conclude, “would be immediately built

up, and we confidently anticipate that other societies would be formed, united in the same faith and hope." In a letter to a friend who had consulted him in relation to this project, he uses this language: "Were I a young man, and unfettered by any engagements, I should prefer the situation you propose to any other within my hopes." But to the committee he made the following reply: —

"I cannot for a moment hesitate as to the answer which I should give to your application. I regard the situation to which you invite me as honorable and important. But Providence has appointed me another lot. Public, domestic, and private considerations, which I need not enlarge upon, leave me no liberty of forsaking the post which I now occupy. Its duties and responsibilities are, indeed, above my strength, and I believe that no selfish regards attach me to it. But I think that I distinctly read in a variety of circumstances the will of God that I should continue here; and unless these change in a very unexpected manner, I shall remain whilst I have strength to labor."

Most fortunate was it for himself and for others, that he felt himself thus bound by duty to the city which had adopted him among her most honored sons. For no sphere in the country could for a moment compare with Boston in its fitness to call out all the best powers of head and heart in a man so constituted. Its unity of character, high moral and intellectual activity, benevolent earnestness, social compactness, as well as its religious, literary, and philanthropic institutions, formed an atmosphere sufficiently stimulating, without dissipating his attention and wasting his energy. The public considerations to which he refers in the foregoing letter, as forbidding him to leave his post, are sufficiently obvious. One of the "private" ones undoubtedly was, that he knew his own peculiarities thoroughly, and was more fully aware than any one else could be of his unfitness, at once from native dispositions and from confirmed habits, to be a polemic or a proselyter. A situation like that to which he was invited in New York would have demanded continual efforts of mind in a controversial direction, and required a zeal for Unitarianism quite foreign to his unsectarian feelings. But his "domestic" ties also detained him in Boston, and to a notice of these we now pass.

When we last saw Mr. Channing in his home, the bright ring of brothers and sisters, clasped by a mother's love, was unbroken; and we purposely left untouched that image of the happy family, of which his own pure, gentle, heavenly affection was the guardian angel. But long before the period at which our narrative has now



arrived, link after link had been removed by the various chances and changes of life,—by marriage, death, and inevitable dispersion. The eldest son, Francis, had early married, as we have already seen; and the eldest daughter, whose gentle heart was from girlhood interlinked in destinies with Washington Allston, had been united to him on his return to America after his studies in Italy, and had gone to England to share the uncertain fortunes of an artist and a man of genius; the third sister had also removed with her husband to New York. Of the four younger brothers, two had entered into the learned professions, two into mercantile pursuits; and thus the once large household had dwindled away. In relation to his sister Ann's marriage, he had thus written to his grandfather Ellery:—

“A few hours ago, Washington and Ann, after their long and patient courtship, were united in marriage. We consider this a happy event; but Ann is too important a member of our family to be resigned without something like sorrow. The ceremony made us rather solemn. I do not wonder at this effect. The obligations of the marriage covenant are so extensive, and the consequences of the union so vast and uncertain, that I should pronounce a person thoughtless in the extreme, who should exhibit no seriousness on such an occasion.

“Your granddaughter has found, I believe, an excellent husband, one who, from principle and affection, will make her happiness his constant object. I hope that she will settle at no great distance from us; but we have not yet sufficient taste for the arts to give Mr. Allston the encouragement he deserves. We have, indeed, money enough to spend on cumbrous furniture, which another generation will throw into the garret as antiquated and absurd, but we cannot afford to adorn our walls with the productions of genius, which delineate the unchanging beauties of nature or the grandeur of man, and to which the lapse of time will impart only new value.”

But sadder separations followed. In the spring of 1810, Francis, from the effects of fatigue while engaged in the laborious discharge of his duties as a lawyer, was seized with violent hemorrhage, and sank rapidly into a decline. He retired to Newport, where he lingered for a time amid the beautiful scenery of his native island, receiving every kindness which the assiduous care of anxious friends could lavish, and in the autumn sailed with his wife and a favorite cousin for Rio Janeiro, with the hope of finding benefit in a change of climate. But his strength had been too

much exhausted, and on the nineteenth day of the voyage he died. Months passed over, and the spring had opened before the intelligence reached Boston. It was on a Sunday, between the morning and the afternoon services, that a friend called to bear the tidings to those in whose hearts hope and anxiety had so long alternated. Mr. Channing was alone as he entered, and instantly read in his countenance a confirmation of their worst forebodings. He silently pressed his hand, requested him to mention it to no one else, and then retired to his study, to gain in prayer the calmness which he felt he needed, before he could tell his mother that her first-born had first entered into the spiritual world. But when at last he summoned the family, his own face was as serene as if he had been a messenger of joy. The next week was one of profoundest mourning, not merely because death had for the first time, after so long a period, entered their circle, nor merely because he who was taken had been a second father, but because they had parted from one who had made life rich by sweetness, affection, cheerful wisdom, incorruptible honor, high hope, and confiding piety. To William this bereavement caused a grief as deep and poignant as a disciplined spirit, devoted to ends of universal good, could feel, for Francis was his bosom friend. But on the Sunday following he preached two appropriate discourses, in which, while not attempting to hide the sense of his own loss, he showed his people that an ascended angel had opened to him bright glimpses of heaven. A few broken sentences, given as they stand in his journals, will best show his state of feeling.

“A brother, — a friend, — a nurse in sickness, — a counsellor. One who so often and so tenderly thought of me, — of us all, — who was a guardian of our happiness. One who grew up with me. One who has engaged so many of my thoughts and feelings. The first-born, the stay of his family. . . .

“The first of our number taken from a circle which before was complete, — how grateful should we be that so many of us have been so long spared to each other, so large a family and so few breaches! — taken from the midst of us, never again to be seen and embraced on earth. . . .

“God has made a melancholy breach in our number. May we feel that this is only the beginning of bereavement. Let us love each other more, and live prepared to resign each other. Let this separation be to survivors a bond of tender union. . . .

“Taken at a distance from us, beyond the reach of our kind offices. His remains committed to the deep, never to be collected by us. . . .

“Taken in the midst of life, — a son, — a husband, — a father. In the full vigor of his powers, when most able to bless and to do good. . . .

“Let me prize more highly the character of my friends, be sensible to their excellences, be grateful to them, and labor to improve them. Let me with frankness and mildness reprove their faults and errors. Let me consider the excellence for which they were made, and be animated from God’s love to seek their welfare. Have I done them justice? The duties of my dear brother have now devolved wholly upon me. Let this awaken me to all my social relations. . . .

“‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart.’ Do I understand this? Let affliction lead me to this divine intercourse, to this fixed thought upon God. He has taken away one object of hope and love, and thus taught us our dependence. Let us look to Him, live upon Him, live for Him. He is our Father, and loves us. It is to refine us, to bring us together again in happier circumstances, that he thus afflicts us. Let every feeling like selfishness be extinguished. This separates me from God. . . .

“God has wide connections in this affliction. He made our friend not for us only, but for the creation, — for himself. His infinite purposes deserve our disinterested reverence. Let us submit. We are not overlooked. God loves us. We must not imagine that God thinks only of us or our family. We must view him in his relations to the infinity of beings. There are infinite beings, dearer and purer, who deserve far more of his regards. He seeks the universal interests of all his creatures. Abba! Father! how slowly, how faintly, do we realize this relation! How happy should we be that *His will* is done! It is our privilege to acquiesce. . . .

“This dear sister, these dear children, are left to us as a legacy, — and our kindness and care for them must never be remitted. How do they call for all our attachment! These children require from me more than affection, — much watchfulness, forethought, study of their characters and propensities; — I must help to form them. What a new motive for self-improvement, disinterestedness, clearness of mind, temperance!”

The last of these extracts indicates the generous feelings of their writer, but only they who experienced the faithfulness with which, through every after year, he fulfilled the trust which he thus acknowledged, can appreciate the depth and delicacy of his affection. Thenceforth he was like a father to his brother’s orphans, an ever-wise and ready counsellor to their widowed mother. Immediately



after his sister's return from South America, he took her and her children home to live for a time with his mother at the parsonage, and a few lines, written by her to a friend, will show, more brightly than any second-hand picture could, how he then appeared in his family.

“While I am cheered and consoled by William's presence and conversation, I can bear everything cheerfully. It would be impossible to give you a full impression of the happy influence which he exerts. At his approach, all trials and perplexities disappear, every feeling but that of kindness vanishes, nothing is seen but smiles, nothing heard but conciliating and loving words. We not only seem, but feel, as human beings should; and I verily believe that, if I was always in his presence, I should never say or do or think anything inconsistent with the purest principles of Christianity. He is constantly occupied; but his few leisure moments are devoted to us, and you would be pleased to see how the children love him. They are fond of all their uncles, but William is the decided favorite. They run to him the moment he opens the door, and he can seldom get away except by stealth. Their highest reward for good conduct is a visit to his study, and their greatest punishment the denial of a game of romps or of a story from Uncle William.”

But another of the family was now to be summoned to join Francis in the “Father's house.” Under date of May 6th, 1815, are entered in Mr. Channing's journal the following brief fragments, which record his high sense of his sister's character, and his warm affection for one, who until her marriage had been his confidante.

“Yesterday brought us the sad tidings of Ann's death. She is gone, — that beloved and excellent sister, — removed after so long an absence. We were not permitted to minister to her last sufferings. The hands of strangers closed her eyes, — a foreign land holds her remains.” [She had died in London, Feb. 2, 1815.]

“How tender she was! — how unwearied her kindness! As a child, how faithful! As a wife, how constant! In friendship how unalterable! . . . .

“Can I ever forget the offices of a nurse which she proffered with so much affection in my last sickness? Can I ever forget her, the last by my bedside at night, the first in the morning, giving me her strength, watching over me as a parent? . . . .

“She lived to be useful. At home she toiled without weariness, and sacrificed herself without a complaint. . . . .

“How silent, unostentatious, were her virtues! As a Christian,

her principles were strong, her sense of duty deep, her heart humble, her professions sincere. She seemed to have acquired in early life the consideration of mature years. Cheerful and animated, she was still governed by the most delicate sense of propriety. How beloved she was by all who knew her! — she could not have had an enemy. Home was her sphere, her happiness. Bound to it by strong affection, she sighed for no pleasures beyond it. She was a stranger to the world. . . .

“Her character particularly inspired confidence. Her heart spoke in her actions. . . .

“Her singular disinterestedness! In her sufferings abroad, what cheerfulness did her letters express! She was too kind to draw on our sympathy. God gave her many blessings; and now he has taken her to himself. . . .

“How she comes to me in her affectionateness! How kind she was to all around her! How silent were her careful assiduities! Under her calm exterior what deep, strong love! How did she bless us, even when least happy herself! . . .

“God multiplies bereavements. Our family is falling to pieces. Is there no bond of union? Are we to be lost to each other? Let not dear Ann depart, without bearing me with her into futurity. Let us think only of following our friends. Let them lead us to heaven. Let the dead be in our hearts. Let us think and talk more as immortals. . . .

“She is gone, not lost. Let me rejoice in her joy. Is she not mindful of us? Did God form such ties that they might be broken? She may be near me. Let her witness in me only sincere affection and piety. . . .

“My mother is more than ever to be my care. I am now her oldest child; she leans on me. . . .

“Let her humility and disinterestedness be my pattern. Let me live to be more useful to my family, friends, people. Let my heart be the seat of every humane and devout affection. Let me be always employed in doing good to others, in denying myself, in rendering offices of kindness, especially of spiritual kindness.”

The following extract from a letter to a friend will serve yet further to show how deep and tender was his affection for this most gentle and loving woman.

“*Boston, May 9, 1815.* You can easily conceive the feelings which this intelligence has awakened. Ann was no common friend. Her heart, which was, perhaps, the most constant in its affections that I have ever known, clung to her family with peculiar tender-

ness. The circumstances of her early life, particularly her attachment to Mr. Allston, separated her from the world, and seemed to extinguish all relish for its ordinary pleasures; and her whole life was given to her family. In her domestic relations I have hardly known one so faithful; and the impression she has left on our hearts is one which time will never obliterate. One of her last acts, before leaving this country, was to unite herself to our church, an act which nothing but the diffidence and humility of her character had led her to defer so long. Since leaving us, we have not been able to observe her course, but the singular consistency and uniformity of her character is a pledge that she was found walking humbly in the path of her duty, and that her end was peace.

“I find that events of this kind disturb my mind much less than formerly. My increasing conviction of the *perfect* goodness of God, of his *paternal* character, of his minute and tender care, and of the riches of his *mercy* in Jesus Christ, the last truth in religion which men truly believe and feel, enables me more cheerfully to resign all things to his disposal. The thought, that God has made our souls immortal, with capacities of angelic purity and glory, and for the very end that we should ascend to heaven, to the society of angels, to moral perfection, to the most intimate union with Himself and his Son,—this thought, when it is felt by us, gives a new aspect to nature, to society, to all our present relations and connections. I have found myself of late inclined to regard the future state of the blessed in a more affecting, and I think attractive, light than formerly, as a state of mutual dependence, of useful services, of the tenderest affections. Our friends, in leaving the body, do not put off humanity, they do not lose their affection for those they leave behind; and I would ask, Do they lose their concern, their pity? Are those sympathies which are so virtuous in our friends on earth, which Jesus felt, unworthy of heaven? An unfeeling heaven, a heaven where the good forget their friends, or are forbidden to feel deeply for them, is certainly not very interesting. Have you never felt, in listening to some descriptions of heaven, that they wanted sensibility? Can we bear that this bond of union between us sufferers on earth and the good in heaven should be dissolved?”

But this faithful son and brother was now himself to leave the roof which his own generous devotedness had made his mother's. In the summer of 1814, he had married his cousin, Ruth Gibbs, and, after passing the winter in the parsonage, he was, by the earnest request of Mrs. Gibbs, to become for a time a member of her family. Here opened upon him a life most rich in gentle happiness and



beautiful affection. His mother-in-law, who was the sister of his father, had much of the character of her brother, and nothing could have been more benignant than her whole aspect and manner. Diffidence blended with dignity surrounded her with an atmosphere of sweet refinement, and, self-forgotten as a child, she found her joy in making all about her bright and content. The ample means which her husband had left enabled her also to gratify every hospitable impulse and elegant taste. In relation to his marriage, one of Mr. Channing's sisters thus writes :—

“ You need not that I should tell you of the respect and tenderness which he always felt for woman ; but you, perhaps, are not aware, that, with all his admiration of the gentler sex, he lived to the age of thirty-four or five, ignorant of the warmest affection of the heart. He had a great respect for woman's rights ; and one of my last conversations with him was on the necessity of a law to secure to a married woman her property, the interest of which he thought should be always paid to her, without her husband's having any claim to control her in its expenditure.”

It may be said, in a word, that the principle here expressed was the one by which Mr. Channing governed himself, with the most scrupulous delicacy and fastidious honor, throughout his married life.

We must leave the reader to infer, from the ever-widening cheerfulness of his later years, the fitness of this union. Inwardly and outwardly his lot henceforth was singularly serene. From about this time commenced, too, his summer visits to Rhode Island, where Mrs. Gibbs, who resided in Boston during the winter, retained a country-seat ; and how much the few months annually passed amid the quiet charms of “Oakland” attuned and harmonized his spirit will hereafter abundantly appear.

In this connection it may be agreeable to those who desire to form a full acquaintance with Mr. Channing, to learn his views of the marriage relation. They are thus presented in a sermon to his people in 1816.

“ In this country, perhaps, the state of woman, the modes of life, and the moral sentiments which pervade the community, are more favorable to conjugal and domestic happiness than in any other part of the world. The culture which is bestowed on the female mind, and which distinguishes modern times from the most refined periods of antiquity,—the respect which is accorded to woman, and which Christianity has done so much to inspire,—the reverence which prevails for the marriage vow, and the indignation

which falls on conjugal infidelity, — the habit by which we are marked, of looking to our homes for the greatest part of our happiness, and the mixture of freedom and delicacy with which our general intercourse is conducted, — all contribute to elevate among us the female character, to render woman the associate of man's most refined pleasures and pursuits, and to confer on the conjugal connection a tenderness and dignity which have rarely distinguished it.

“Women! in proportion as you contemplate the condition of your sex in other countries and other ages, whether in the rude scenes of savage life, or in the confinements of Eastern voluptuousness, whether in the ages of Grecian and Roman splendor, when female culture extended but little beyond the distaff or the loom, or even in the highest ranks of life on the other side of the Atlantic, — I am persuaded that you will find reason to bless that Providence which has appointed you this goodly heritage; and I would call upon you to express your gratitude to God, and to vindicate the female character. . . .

“The indissolubleness of marriage should be distinctly and seriously weighed by those who have to form this connection. Let not the most solemn engagement of life be an act of rashness and unreflecting passion. Let the heart take counsel of the understanding. Let the future as well as the present be brought into the account. Let not the eye or the imagination be trusted. Let the young man or the young woman inquire, Is this a friend with whom I would wish to spend, not only my youth, but my age, not only my health, but my sickness, on whom I can lean in my griefs, to whom I can confide my trials, to whom I am willing to resign my character, — who, if reverses should befall me, would help me to sustain hardship and distress, who will reciprocate my best feelings, who will walk with me to heaven? . . .

“The different qualities by which man and woman are distinguished and contrasted prepare them for a peculiarly tender and beneficial union, — prepare them to supply each other's deficiencies, to perfect each other's character, and to bear distinct, yet equally necessary, parts in that most important work of the present state, the support and rearing of a family. Marriage, then, ought to be regarded as instituted for a very noble end, — to awaken the heart, to exercise and strengthen its sensibilities and charities, to train it to the perfection of social virtue, to confer the highest enjoyments of friendship, to secure to each party the benefit of the other's strength, intelligence, and virtues, and to unite both in forming useful and virtuous members for the community.

“ Were our views of the connection thus elevated, did we always regard it as the great refiner of the heart, with what new cheerfulness would its duties be performed, its sacrifices be endured ! Marriage is not viewed as it should be ; the dignity of its end is overlooked. Too many rush into it without understanding its proper happiness and design, and of course without weighing its obligations. Can we wonder that its duties are so often neglected ? . . . .

“ There should be an habitual flow of minute and kind attentions. There are a thousand nameless, indescribable offices by which the heart expresses its interest, and which serve as a continual nourishment to the affections. There is danger that the familiarity of constant intercourse may produce a negligence of manners, a want of mutual respect, a carelessness as to pleasing. It is not, I fear, uncommon to see the fervor of youthful affection cooling into indifference. There may be no positive unkindness ; there may be enough of decorum ; but there is nothing of that love which overflows in minute and ceaseless kindness. Every day brings with it opportunities of mutual services, which to a stranger may seem unimportant, but which have their value when prompted by the heart. Accustom yourselves to multiply expressions of affection ; aim to give pleasure ; abstain from what will give pain ; make little sacrifices. The atmosphere which feeds the flame is an invisible and silent agent, and in this respect it is an emblem of the minute and gentle offices by which conjugal affection is sustained.

“ Another duty belonging to husbands and wives, included in what I have just stated, is this, — they should cultivate each other’s society. They should avoid long and unnecessary separations, for these generate unconcern and produce an independence on each other which marks a declining attachment. As far as is consistent with their duties, they should include each other in all their plans. They should, in particular, share the same pleasures. There should be few solitary joys. The more of common objects, of common tastes, of common resources they possess, the more tender and beneficial will be their union. They should often read together the same books, view together the same scenes of nature, enjoy the same society. It is a bad symptom, when these nearest friends seem weary of each other’s society, when their plans of life seem to have few points of contact, when their happiness is derived from different springs. . . . .

“ Let me mention one more duty belonging to husbands and wives. They should labor to improve each other’s characters. This is the noblest purpose and use of the connection. They who



sustain this near relation, and have consequently great power over each other's minds, should regard one another in the light which the gospel throws on our nature as immortal beings, capable of great improvement, and whose highest interests are in a future state. Whilst mindful of each other's present happiness, their great solicitude should be that eternity should be secured. Let them watch over each other's hearts and minds with affectionate concern, mutually inviting honest and friendly admonition, and aiding and strengthening religious and benevolent sentiments. . . .

"This is the noblest use of the conjugal relation; and when marriage is thus employed, when it becomes a refiner of our nature, uniting the mind with God, and elevating it to heaven, — when they who sustain it prove to each other sources and cherishers of virtuous sentiment, and see in their present union a preparation for indissoluble friendship after death, — when marriage assumes this high and holy character, it is a felicity almost too pure for earth, it is a foretaste of the attachments of a better world."

In Mr. Channing's journals, under date of October, 1816, is found the following affecting passage, in relation to his first-born child. Its simple story needs no word of explanation.

"I remembered the love of Jesus to little children. I remembered the kindness of Him who has called himself our Father, and whose love must be infinitely purer than mine. Still my heart clung to her; and when I saw the last struggle on Wednesday afternoon, about twenty-four hours after her birth, I wept over her as if I had been deprived of a long-possessioned blessing. After death her countenance became composed, and to me seemed the most beautiful, soft, gentle, and expressive, which I had ever seen at so early an age. Thursday afternoon I carried her to the tomb, in the full and certain hope of a blessed resurrection. I feel as if my prayers for this little one, and my baptismal and funeral services, had formed a connection between us. I feel as if I had a child in a happier world, who will know her past history, who will know how earnest were my wishes to bless her, to guide her to all virtue and felicity; and I hope yet to meet her, and to know that my prayers were not in vain, and to see that my child is more excellent, more happy, than I could have rendered her."

But in 1818 he had the privilege of writing to his sister in a happier strain, on the occasion of the birth of a daughter.

"Had I not learned so many lessons of this world's mutableness, I might be in danger of dreaming of a perfect joy on earth. But I do not forget where I am. I hope to remember why I am placed

here, and to consider my new relation chiefly as an enlargement of my means of usefulness, and as giving me an object for the heart and for Christian care and exertion. I have not, as you may readily suppose, thought much about *education* as yet! I have a general persuasion, however, that children are educated chiefly by example, by a continual, insensible influence of those around them, and that the surest way to improve our children is to improve ourselves. I do not mean that this motive is as powerful as it should be. I hope, however, that we shall in some degree be governed by it, and shall labor to express no feeling or principle before our little girl which we should not wish her to adopt."

A few extracts from his papers will show the feelings with which he welcomed this young being intrusted to his care.

"What dignity Christianity sheds round the event of birth! How unimportant are the rise and fall of empires, in comparison with the entrance of an immortal soul into existence! Here is a new *agent* introduced into the universe, — a being now so frail, yet to grow to vast, to inconceivable influence, — a being now so dependent, yet to sustain immense, all-important relations. This child is to survive the changes of nature! We think only of the present. God has formed it for high and unknown purposes. . . .

"May this child never have cause to reproach us for evil example, neglect, ruinous indulgence. Through its whole everlasting being, may it remember us, as, under God, its earliest, best friends, by whose kind care it learned to form itself upon the principles which are the foundation of eternal peace. Here is a mind to labor for, which is to live forever. Our influence on it is to be perpetual. What a claim this little being brings with it! What latent capacities! — yet not one developed. Here is a being whom I may taint or raise to immortal glory. Is this child given to us to become ours? What a possession, to keep the heart alive, not for a day or year, but for life, for ages upon ages!"

And to his people, on the Sunday following, he said: —

"We have heard of a barbarous nation where the child was received with weeping. But this is not nature. There is instinctive, irresistible joy, when we look on the little being brought into a new world, with a form so perfect, a structure so delicate, a countenance so winning, — who comes a stranger to all our solitudes, who sinks so securely into slumber, as if it were lodged in paradise, who has no resource in its own power for all the wants to which it is exposed, but finds supply beyond its needs in the affection that welcomes it. . . .

“We were made to love. This is the end of God in all social relations. It is his purpose that no man should live for himself. He has made life to be a succession of labors and sacrifices for the happiness of others. It is for this that children are made so helpless. They are born weak, that they should rest upon our strength. Their limbs cannot sustain their weight, that they may be folded in our arms and warmed upon our breasts. It is for this that God gives them such sweetness, innocence, beauty. His purpose is to enlarge our hearts by generous toils and self-denials. The hardest heart melts at the sight of infancy. In every home, however rude, however splendid, one being is embraced with sincere love, and that is the new-born child. The young woman of fashion, whose affections have been dissipated by false pleasures, becomes another person as she clasps her infant in her arms. New tenderness fills her bosom, new solitudes and hopes spring up. She learns to live in the happiness of this little dependent creature. And in the house of the poor laborer, what overflowing tenderness is poured out to welcome, what toils are cheerfully borne to rear, the child whose birth imposes a perpetual burden! Children call forth a tenderness which softens the whole character in all relations. We enter a warmer region, when we approach a home gladdened by their artlessness, simplicity, confiding affection, playful gladness. The heart awakes to healthier action, and becomes more susceptible to all good impressions. Home is the nursery of the heart; children are really our teachers, and the lessons which they communicate are love, self-forgetfulness, interest in the welfare of others. I am persuaded that just in proportion as the domestic affections have opportunity to expand in any community, is general kindness, sympathy, philanthropy diffused. . . .

“A Christian parent, on the birth of a child, has sentiments like these brought with power to his mind: — ‘Here is a being committed to me worth more than the world. I am now honored with an infinite trust. This cradle contains a *life*, the issues of which are shrouded in the solemn uncertainties of the everlasting future. Here is not only a helpless being to be loved, but a growing being to be trained. It is to be influenced in its growth by every one around it. It is to learn the language which falls upon its ear, to catch the manners which pass before its eye, to receive impressions so easily made and so indelible that they will seem like nature. It is to reflect not only the countenances, but the characters, of those who have given it existence. It is a creature of sympathy and imitation, which will receive traces never to be erased. What a trust! God’s noblest work is put into my hands. I may do much to in-



scribe God's image on this immortal mind. I may do much to form a friend for society, a source of good for mankind. I may do much to give a new inhabitant to heaven, a new member to the companies of the blessed. Thanks to thee, O God, for the relation I sustain! By thy grace I will fulfil its duties.' . . . .

"It is, indeed, a most merciful appointment of God, that children, by needing so much care, impose such responsibility. Many, many parents would have wasted life, neglected and destroyed themselves, had not the parental relation awakened them to reflection. The solemn thought, that the immortal mind intrusted to them might perish through their neglect, has called multitudes home to their own hearts and to God. They have been brought to feel the importance of their own future interests, in thinking of those of their children. The consideration that their own characters would be communicated to those whom they loved more than themselves, that their children would receive from them principles, habits, and feelings, has induced a watchfulness, a regularity of speech and conduct, and an application to duty, by which their own souls have been purified. Perhaps we little suspect how much of the virtue of a community is to be traced to the strong feeling of responsibility which is awakened in the mind by the parental relation. I repeat it, children are inestimable blessings, by calling forth the consciences of their parents. The instructions we impart come back upon ourselves. . . . .

"Let me add one more thought, most familiar, yet most affecting. In a child we gain a being who can return as well as receive kindness. The love of a good child, — does earth hold as rich a blessing? Its smiles and cheerful obedience repay our toils during its youth; and who can express the value of its affectionate attentions as we advance into age? Who can smooth the pillow of sickness like the hand of the daughter whose sensibility we nurtured in her tender years? Who can sustain our infirm steps like the son whose manly virtues we helped to form? Who would not have his eyes closed, his remains committed to the dust, by filial affection? A good child is a blessing through life, and a blessing after death. I cannot think that in another world we shall forget the kindness which guided and watched over us in this. If any earthly sentiment survive beyond the grave, surely it will be the gratitude of the child and the joy of the parent, when they meet in heaven."

On the occasion of the baptism of one of his children, Mr. Channing thus expressed his views of that rite, which some of the readers of this biography may be glad to know.

“The question is asked, ‘Why apply a religious institution to a child before he can comprehend or desire its benefits?’ Such a question overlooks the great fact of man’s existence, that we are born into various human relations, that by birth we enter into a society, into a religious community, as well as into a family. It is in vain to say that children should be left to choose a form of religion for themselves. They cannot escape the influence of family, of country. If Christian principles do not restrain and elevate them, other principles will usurp control over their susceptible years. Such is man’s nature and condition. From these considerations it follows, that Christianity must stoop to the cradle, and take the infant into its arms from the hour of birth. It must make the first claim to children, and set its seal upon them from their earliest breath. It is wise and fit that by some visible sign our religion should lay its hand of benediction upon the young beings who are to be trained by its discipline. The child is, indeed, unconscious of the meaning of our act in baptism; but at that moment it is an intelligent and immortal being, having within itself the seeds of affections and capacities which are to unfold forever. It soon is to become conscious of that filial feeling which is the simplest element of piety. And how expressive is the rite by which it is given up to Jesus Christ to receive the influences of his religion!”

Two sons were in a few years also born to Mr. Channing; and, settled in a delightful home in the vicinity of his mother and of his wife’s family, surrounded by a society which listened to his every word with interest and lent a ready aid to all his plans, esteemed and loved by the whole community in which he lived, and every year becoming more widely influential, he felt, as he said to a friend, that “his condition was as prosperous as he could well bear; and that, were it not for almost daily debility and suffering, he should fail of the discipline of pain which every being needs to purify away his self-love.” In reference to his constant and increasing infirmity, he writes thus in his journals:—

“Let me gratefully accept the affliction of sickness, and chiefly desire that God’s ends shall be answered. Let not one sinking, repining thought come over me.”

“Sickness has temptations. Let me not pamper self, but with distinct purpose employ all means to health, as fitting me for usefulness and for the service of God and man.”

So enfeebled had he become in the winter and spring of 1822, that it was determined, at length, that he should try the effect of a voyage and a year’s journey abroad. In consequence of this neces-

sity, the Society in Federal Street, with the alacrity which they had always shown to promote his comfort, passed, at a full meeting, the following votes :—

“ 1. That the Standing Committee be authorized to engage some person, with the concurrence of the Rev. Dr. Channing, to supply his pulpit for one year.

“ 2. That the Rev. Dr. Channing be released from all services for his parish for one year, and that Deacon Davis be requested to express to him the earnest wish of this meeting to do all in their power to conduce to the restoration of his health.

“ 3. That the Standing Committee be authorized to raise by subscription the sum of one thousand dollars to defray the additional expense of the year.

D. D. ROGERS, *Chairman*.

BENJ. GUILD, *Clerk*.”

On May 26, the Sunday before he sailed, he thus communicated to his people his reasons for going abroad :—

“ The circumstance which has decided me to leave you is the apprehension, which experience has almost made a certainty, that, if I remain, I shall linger through life in a condition unfavorable to my own improvement and to public usefulness, in that middle state between sickness and health, that alternation of animation and languor, that liability to sink under any considerable exertion, which I have experienced to a great degree ever since my connection with you, and which my late indisposition has sensibly increased. More than a year has now elapsed since the interruption of my professional labors, and when I look back on this period, my spirit droops at the thought of continuing to drag on existence ineffectively and unprofitably, nursing a frail body, seeking relaxation as a task, now gaining and now relapsing, and not only put to silence on Sundays, but compelled through the week to forego the books and means of improvement which from early years have been to me as daily bread. The reflections, which, in these circumstances, are apt to fasten on a minister’s mind, are such as others cannot easily understand. Conscious of past deficiencies, he is solicitous to repair them, whilst, for aught he knows, the Lord of the vineyard may have already dismissed him as an unprofitable laborer. I mean not to speak of the past year as of one of great suffering, but, in the inactivity to which I have been reduced, an effort has been often needed to sustain my spirits, and my feelings, as well as my sense of duty, strongly urge me to make a decided effort for health. If I fail, I shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that I have declined no labor for recovering the capacity of serving God and my fellow-men.”



## CHAPTER VI. — EUROPEAN JOURNEY.

ÆT. 42-43. 1822-1823.

BEFORE following Mr. Channing in his travels abroad, it may be well, for the end of showing the delight with which he looked on nature and his capacity for enjoying beauty, to present some sketches of scenery from letters written during a journey through New Hampshire and Vermont, in the summer of 1821.

“ *Centre Harbor, N. H., July 31, 1821.* From the east windows, at which I now sit, and out of which my eye often steals, I look down immediately on the lake, but not on such a sheet of water as your imagination probably represents to you. I learned, before I reached it, that the Winnipiseogee was studded with islands of considerable extent, and in great number, so that you can take in but a small part of it from the shores. But whilst this detracts from its unity and grandeur, you find beauties of another kind. The channels which divide the islands, the numerous points and projections, the shores fringed with trees, by multiplying the lights and casting shadows on the water, give great interest to the scene. The shore opposite to me is covered with pines, stretching to some distance, and beyond them rises the noble Ossipee, which, covered with the light mist that now floats over it, I have, more than once, when accidentally glancing up, taken for a vast mass of clouds. My eye rests upon it with increasing pleasure, and I feel, that, were I neighbor to a mountain, I should establish a friendship with it, perhaps more intimate than I have formed with any part of nature. My mind seems to enlarge, to swell with these majestic forms, which claim kindred with the skies.”

“ *White River, Vt., Aug. 6.* As I ascended towards its source, its animating characteristics grew more and more striking, and I felt its power. It is, indeed, a peculiar stream, and forms a remarkable contrast with the Connecticut, into which it empties. The moment you leave the point where they meet, — I may say, the very first step you take on White River, — you feel that you are forming a new acquaintance, that you have found a river of different features and habits, not contented to wind slowly and silently through fertile and smooth banks, but full of spirit and youthful sportiveness; loving solitudes, not for meditation, but that it may leap and dance without restraint, and listen to its own brisk murmurs, multiplying its quick turns, as if eager for change, —

rushing against the stones and rocks, like youth engaging in mock contests.

“The whole stream has an exhilarating character from its beginning; but it was not until the afternoon, under a glorious sky, that I felt its power. In a short time, the banks began to rise more precipitously and to a greater height, and the turns of the river were more sudden, and the bank on which we rode steeper, so that we found ourselves in the midst of the wildest scenery which I remember. Before, behind, all around us, were heights thrown together in a confused manner, sometimes quite hemming us in, sometimes opening into views of wide extent, and receiving from the sun a most various, shifting light. Indeed, such confusion of lights and shades, of effulgence and fainter illumination, you cannot easily conceive. I found the effect on my own mind quite different from that of former scenery. It was not as exalting as the mountain grandeur of New Hampshire, but it exhilarated me more, and gave me the very excitement which an invalid needs.

“This very striking scenery continues but a few miles. Then the banks recede more gradually, the hills slope more gently; the stream seems willing to refresh itself, amidst its brisk movements, with spots of quiet beauty. Still it keeps up its consistency. It slumbers nowhere; and when its surface is smoothest, you will here and there see a rock or stone breaking its uniformity, and making its motion visible by a little eddy or a line of depression on the water.”

“*Sandy Hill, New York, Aug. 7.* On Tuesday morning, we began to follow again the Onion River, which wound among hills less bold than those we had seen the day before; but, viewed through the misty light of the morning, they gave us continual pleasure, until we reached a spot which had power to efface for a time all other impressions. Nobody had whispered to us that we were to meet anything extraordinary. You will judge, then, of our astonishment and delight, when, after hearing for a few minutes an unusual tumult, we found ourselves on a bridge, which discovered to us, on both sides, a deep, rocky, perpendicular ravine, through which the river, contracted to a few yards, was rushing, raging, foaming, as if it had reserved all its might and passion for this single spot. The ravine or cleft seemed to me a quarter or sixth of a mile in length, and so straight, that from two or three points the eye could command nearly its whole extent. The cliffs rose perpendicularly to the height, I should think, of forty to sixty feet, in parallel lines of solid rock. That so remarkable a rapid should not even have been named to us was matter of wonder, and

proved how little impression is made by the mighty works of God. We clambered to the highest point of the banks, and looked down the giddy steep with an emotion which had hardly been surpassed at Glen's Falls. . . .

"We soon found ourselves entering a region which drew from us exclamations of increasing delight and admiration. We had heard that the pass through which our road lay was called 'The Gulf,' and that we were to pass the range which is eminently called the Green Mountains, not by scaling them, as before, but by threading a valley at their feet. Still, so little was said, that we expected little. How can I express our feelings when the true glory of this spot was revealed to us? Instead of ascending, as on our former route, a long and steep cleft, hemmed in on each side by precipices of forests, we now followed a road of easy ascents and descents. On one side the bank rose suddenly, so that its height could not easily be seen; but on the other rushed the branch of the White River, removing to a sufficient distance the mountains from which it separated us, so as to enable us to see distinctly their declivities, and outlines, and forests. In our former passage, we left our carriage from necessity, — here, from choice, — and we walked perhaps a mile through this deep valley, lifting our astonished eyes to the towering and beautiful summits, which seemed worthy of the region they inhabited.

"Represent to yourself a succession of mountains through more than a mile's extent, rising almost perpendicularly from their bases, sometimes stretching before us in a line, sometimes forming a majestic sweep, opening as we advanced, so as to discover their outlines and distinct masses, and clothed to the very top with the freshest, richest, most luxuriant foliage. I was astonished to see such perpendicular heights, in which it seemed scarcely possible that trees should take root, so closely wooded that the eye could not discover a speck of dark earth amidst their boundless verdure. To say that the woods were green would give you no idea of them. They had the brightness and tenderness of spring, with the fulness of summer; and, instead of presenting a confused mass of verdure, their tops were so distinct, that the grace and majesty of particular trees might easily be traced. The light and temperature favored us, and we lingered, most unwilling to take the last look."

In a letter, written soon after his return, and which is of additional interest, as showing how solemn were his associations with the scenery of Newport, he thus refers to the influence of natural beauty.



“*Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Sept. 6, 1821.* My journey was not lost; and this I should say, even had I returned without one additional particle of strength; for it left impressions and recollections which will make me richer and happier for life. This magnificent creation has been to me, even from my boyhood, a principal source of happiness; but I never entered into its spirit, felt its power and glories, as on this journey. I should hardly dare to travel over the same ground again, lest the bright images which are treasured up in memory should be dimmed by a second sight.

“But nature was not my chief enjoyment. I owed much to my companions, who gave more than they received. Perhaps, if I were to name the circumstance in which I consider myself most enviably distinguished, I should say, it is the intimacy which I have enjoyed, and still enjoy, with so many of the first and best of your sex. I could not have ended my journey with as unrepining a spirit as I did, had I not had a home to receive me, which I am weak enough to think the best home on earth, and which had gone with me and secretly mixed with all my joys among the mountains, lakes, and rivers, which seemed to divide me from it. . . .

“I was powerfully reminded of the early years of my life, when these shores were my favorite and almost constant haunts. Then, before I knew you, I had not ‘found rest to my soul,’ for I was very much a stranger to true religion. My spirit, consumed with passionate fires, thirsted for some unknown good, and my body pined away to a shadow under the workings of a troubled mind. Then I spent almost whole days on the sea-shore, where the majesty and power of nature, absorbing, exalting me, and transporting me beyond myself, ministered most happily to the diseased soul. Strange as it may seem, I can recollect that I became buoyant and exhilarated in proportion to the wildness and sublimity around me, and I leaped for joy when a wave, which seemed to menace ruin, broke on the rock where I stood, and mounted in clouds to the skies. Thanks to God, those days of tumult are past, and an existence, the beginning of which is still a mystery to me, and which was wrapt in many clouds, has opened into blessings which I should not have dared to anticipate.”

It was at the close of the month of May, 1822, that Mr. Channing bade farewell to his three blooming children, to his parent, family, friends, society, and, in company with his wife, sailed for England. On the eve of departure, he thus wrote to his mother:—

" May 27, 1822.

" MY DEAR MOTHER, — I cannot go without leaving you a line. At this moment, when I think of my approaching separation from you, I recall, with more than usual tenderness, your affection and your claims, and I pray God to reward and crown you with his best blessings.

" It is one of my greatest griefs, that I do not leave you in better health, and I beg you to neglect no means of building it up. I enclose a hundred dollars, which I wish you to spend very much for this object.

" I cannot but believe that you would be happier, if you would relinquish housekeeping; and you will see, in my letter from Lucy, how entirely she agrees with me. Ruth joins with me in assuring you, that, if you could be happy at our house on our return, we should rejoice to receive you.

" I hope you will not be anxious about us. We sail under every advantage, and I have a cheering hope that I shall return to be more to my family and people than I have been. You will often hear from us, either immediately or through other friends; and should anything prevent free communication, you will remember that we are always under the care of Him who alone makes home a place of safety, and who can make every place equally secure. My spirits are wonderfully sustained. I go with a cheerful, confiding mind, and hope that, whilst I am remembered with affection, I shall not be with sorrow.

" My dear mother, may many years be added to your life, and may they be brightened by the increasing affection, usefulness, and virtues of your children. You will be the object of my daily prayers, and I know I shall not be forgotten in yours.

" Your grateful and affectionate son."

With the aid of extracts selected from his journals and correspondence, let us now rapidly follow Mr. Channing during a year which, with all its rich experiences, was to him one of exile, rather than of enjoyment. And first, from the notes of his voyage, we will take a few passages which manifest the buoyant, fresh joy with which he watched the changes of ocean.

" *June 25.* On this day I was exhilarated by a truly magnificent scene. The wind was strong and fair, and had called the ocean, after its long repose, into new life. The sky, obscured with clouds, gave to the waves that dark, polished hue, for which I can find no name, and which is one of their most beautiful colors. Exceedingly minute ripples hurried, swept, flew over the surface,

and marked the fleetness of the wind as distinctly as if that subtle element had become the object of sight. Every sail was expanded and swelled into a graceful form, as if eager to enjoy the favoring breeze. The ship seemed to have caught the life and spirit of the elements, rushing forward, as for a prize, cleaving the waves, and dashing them from her sides in an azure sparkling brine and a foam of snowy whiteness, as if to brighten and deck her triumphant flight. In such moments, the soul seems to add to its own energies the power which is vivifying nature and exults in the consciousness of a more intense existence. . . . .

“The sight of the sea-bird struck me with its loneliness. I thought of its spending the night on the ocean. But I remembered that it had no home to forget, and considered what a bed it must find on the waves. The sea-bird is rocked in nature’s cradle, and enjoys a sleep which few find on shore. How many, torn with passion or remorse, might envy it! There is a striking contrast in the rough, mighty ocean being thus the chosen dwelling of repose. . . . .

“The soul and nature are attuned together. Something within answers to all we witness without. When I look on the ocean in its might and tumult, my spirit is stirred, swelled. When it spreads out in peaceful blue waves, under a bright sky, it is dilated, yet composed. I enter into the spirit of the earth, and this is always good. Nature breathes nothing unkind. It expands, or calms, or softens us. Let us open our souls to its influences. . . . .

“The ocean is said to rage, but never so to me. I see life, joy, in its wild billows, rather than rage. It is full of spirit, eagerness. In a storm, we are not free to look at the ocean as an object of sentiment. Danger then looks up the soul to its true influence. At a distance from it, we might contemplate it as a solemn minister of Divine justice, and witness of God’s power to a thoughtless world; but we could associate with it only moral ideas,—not a blind rage. At least, I have seen nothing which gives nature an unkind expression. . . . .

“We talk of *old* ocean, hoary ocean; I cannot associate age with it. It is too buoyant, animated, living. Its crest of foam is not hoariness, but the breaking forth of life. Ocean is perpetual youth. . . . .

“In a gale, you are struck with the tumultuous restlessness of the ocean. Instead of lengthened waves, it mounts and swells irregularly, as if too full of life, too impatient, to submit to any rule. The waves chase one another eagerly, and with an intractable vehemence, and break and whiten through excess of spirit.



They do not seem to rise by a foreign impulse, but spontaneously, exultingly. You are reminded of the agency of the wind, not by the large, precipitous masses of water which are tossed so confusedly around you, for these seem instinct with their own life; you see the wind in their torn, and ruffled, and swept surfaces, and in the spray which flashes and is whirled and scattered from their tops. It is truly an animating scene. You feel yourself in the midst of life and power, and hear air and ocean joining their voices of might to inspire a kindred energy. There is awe, — not a depressing, but triumphant awe. Our spirits mix with the elements, and partake the fulness of their power.

“There is constant variety in such a scene. The ‘trough,’ as the sailor calls it, is, in fact, a valley in the ocean, and, on each side, waves higher than the ship bound your view. In a moment, you ride on these mountains, and a wide horizon opens on you, the distinct line of which is broken by heaps of ocean, sometimes rising into peaks, which break as soon as formed, and give place to new creations. Vast structures thus grow and vanish almost in an instant, and the eye finds no resting-place in the perpetual revolutions. The waves, swelling above, and approaching, as if to overwhelm you, though they do not alarm, show a power so akin to destruction, as to give a momentary sensation of danger, and the spirit feels something of the pleasure of escape, when the ship is seen to triumph over its invaders.

“There is, too, a feeling of elevation, when, in such a scene, where nature is in uproar, and putting forth around us her mightiest energies, we are conscious of inward serenity, feel ourselves unshaken in the tumult and alive to adoration and joy. The soul has a consciousness of greatness, in possessing itself, and in converting into the nourishment of its noblest emotions the might and majesty of the universe. . . .

“There is great beauty joined with this majesty, as through all nature. We seldom see more power. The awful mountain top delights to bathe its grandeur in the richest, softest beams of the rising or setting sun; sweet flowers wave and smile in the chasms of the precipice; and so the mountain billow often breaks into sparkling spray, and the transparent arch beneath shines with an emerald brightness, which has hardly a rival in the richest hues of the vegetable creation.

“After witnessing a gale, I was shut up for several days in the cabin, and did not return to the deck until a remarkable change had taken place. A calm had succeeded. It was hard to connect what I now saw with my last view of the ocean, — to feel that I

was looking on the same element. The irregular, broken, wildly-tossing, tumultuous billows had vanished, and lengthened, continuous, slowly-advancing swells followed one another, not as in pursuit, but as if finding pleasure in gentle motion.

“Instead of bursting into foam, or being tossed into infinite inequalities by the sweeping, hurrying winds, their polished, molten surface, whilst varied by soft flowing lines, was unruffled by a single breath. They seemed, as they rolled in regular intervals towards us, like the gentle heaving of a sleeping infant’s breast. I did not feel as if the ocean was exhausted by its late efforts, but as if, having accomplished its manifestations of awe-inspiring might, it was now executing a more benignant ministry, speaking of the mercy and the blissful rest of God. Perhaps no image of repose is so perfect as the tranquillity of an element so powerful, and so easily wrought into tumult. I looked, and was at peace.”

On landing at Liverpool, Mr. Channing met with the warmest welcome from many liberal-minded friends, whose hearts had been already prepared, by his writings and reputation, to receive him. But he found himself utterly unfitted, by weakness and depression, to bear the pleasing excitement of forming acquaintances; and, hastily bidding farewell to the intelligent, humane, refined, and munificent circle which opened to him their hospitable homes, he departed upon his journey to the Lakes. A few extracts from his journals will show what refreshment he found amidst the exquisite scenery of Westmoreland and Cumberland.

“*Lancaster, July 11.* The castle at Lancaster is, to a stranger, singularly interesting. It was the first noble monument I had seen of times which, however fierce and lawless, must still be regarded as rich to overflowing in generous feeling, and as containing, in a rude state, the principles of the great social changes which have since been developed. It is now a heterogeneous mass, — the modern additions seeming to be in fine taste, when viewed in detached parts, but having no unity, and wholly failing in correspondence with the remains of the ancient fabric. The chief of these is a gateway, protected by two towers, the battlements overhanging the base, and bearing record to the violence of an age when lordly power felt the want of a security that is now enjoyed equally by the high and low.

“This castle, of which Edward the Third was the founder, once the seat of strength and magnificence of the dukes of Lancaster, is now crowded with felons, debtors, lunatics, and has become a workshop for convicts, an asylum for madness, a court-house, with

its jury-rooms, crown and county halls, and the labyrinth of offices in which justice so often loses her way. What a monument this singular building is of the spirit and condition of past and present times! The hammer once sounded here, riveting arms; the culprit now wields it in forging the most vulgar utensils for the cook or ploughboy. Once it set at defiance the authority of the state, and the owner measured all rights by the sword; now the judge, with no signs of power but an enormous wig and robe, administers, we hope impartially, equal laws, to which the lives and property of all orders are subject. Once it resounded with shouts, the neigh of steeds, the clang of armor, the joyful tumult of a boundless hospitality; now the taskmaster metes out cheerless labors to the guilty or unfortunate prisoners, and the high orders of society enter it only to break its silence with the jargon of law or the sentence of death. That was an age of wild, unrestrained action of our nature, when society was now shaken by the whirlwinds of passion, now brightened by flashes of heroic, generous feeling, — when man was a terror or a glory in his sphere, — when stronger dependencies and more relentless passions, more devoted attachments and more desolating feuds, gave society at once a more delightful and yet a more fearful interest than at present. How various is our nature! How shall we unite into one social state the virtues, principles, joys, which have marked its different stages?"

*July 13th to 18th.* "I am now at Pooley's Bridge, Ulles Water, and have to look back on days of activity, enjoyment, and various perceptions and sensations which can hardly be recalled. Scenes of grandeur, and wildness, and beauty have passed before my eyes and through my mind so rapidly, that I shrink from the task of separating them. My pleasure has been greatly impaired by the state of my health, fettering me amidst most alluring objects, checking my ascent of hills, forbidding me to penetrate depths and moist places, to expose myself to the damp winds of the lakes, &c. Still I have enjoyed much.

"Saturday I spent on Windermere, a lake of great beauty, the most cheerful of this glorious company, spreading into wider expanses, seeming less desirous of privacy and solitude, and encircled with banks less high and precipitous, as if it wished greater communion with nature. It has more *beauty* than any I have seen. It is twelve miles long, and perhaps three miles in its greatest breadth; but its width generally is less, so that the opposite banks may be comprehended in one view, and their projections made to combine with the islands to give almost an infinite variety to its mild surface. Its distinguishing charm lies in its finely marked



and varied outline. Here the land gently swells into the lake, and there the water seeks a more deep repose in bays or coves which it has formed by a kindly soliciting influence from the shore. There are occasionally points of some boldness, enough to prevent tame-ness. But the land and water seem never to have contended for empire. Where the former advances, it is gradually, not by sharp, angular projections, but graceful curves, and it clothes itself with a richer, fresher verdure, as if to shed new glory over the lake; and when the water encroaches, you might easily imagine that it was only that it might spread a calm surface beneath the hills, to reflect more vividly their forms and hues. . . .

“The day was peculiarly favorable, and, though I sailed at noon, the prospect was not injured by a glaring or monotonous light. The clouds veiled the sky, but occasionally parted to throw gleams of lustre on island, shore, or lake; whilst a gentle intermitting breeze now drew transient, slowly-moving ripples on the surface of the water, and now left the element unbroken, as if to fulfil its office of responding in perfect harmony to the heavens. . . .

“The effect of stations depends very much on the light, and the condition of the atmosphere. The same prospect is an entirely different thing at sunrise or sunset, — under a warm or a cold sky. I feel that I have done little justice to the lakes, and the scenery round them, in my hasty view. To see a fine prospect under one light is like looking at a countenance in a single attitude and with one expression. No wonder that many are disappointed, and that descriptions are given of this country which seem, to travellers who see it at different seasons, wholly fictitious. Beauty depends on connection and harmony. A feature of a prospect, which, when thrown into shade or softened by mist, gives to its whole a great charm, may become a deformity, when seen through a clear atmosphere under a bright sun. I know, as yet, little of this country’s powers and resources in relation to the imagination, although I have seen enough to delight me, and make me wish to spend a season here. . . .

“Next we visited Grassmere Water, a sacred spot, a seclusion from all that is turbulent and unholy in life. It was near sunset as we approached this water. We found ourselves descending a mount called Loughrigg into a valley, in which reposed this sweet lake, unruffled, smooth, hemmed in by sheltering mountains. The solemn heights towards the setting sun showed to us their dark sides reflected with wonderful distinctness in the still bosom of the lake, within whose waters they seemed to find even a quieter abode than in the tranquil heavens into which their tops ascended. This repe-

tition of the dark sides of the mountains threw a solemn shade over the part of the lake to which the reflection was confined, whilst beyond this line a mild light, answering to that of the heavens, and of other mountains, gleamed from the water, investing it at one moment with various, but not inharmonious, forms of beauty.

“The effect of this lake on the spirit was immediate, deep, penetrating the inmost soul, and awakening a feeling of something profound in one’s own nature. Windermere was tranquil, but it had a cheerful tranquillity. Its genius was peace, but peace with a smiling aspect, wooing society and sympathy. Grassmere seemed to be spread out in the mountain recesses as an abode for lonely, silent, pensive meditation, — for the inspired imagination, which, in still abstraction from vulgar realities, would give itself up to ideal beauty, — for the spirit of love, which, wearied with man’s strifes and passions, would meet and commune with a kindred spirit in nature, — for piety to approach God without distraction, to see him in the harmony, to hear him in the silence of his creation. The character of this place is that of seclusion, but not of stern or sorrowful seclusion, congenial with the mind which injury or disappointment has made impatient or sick of the world. It invites rather the mild enthusiast, who, amidst the deformities of life, still sees what is lovely in human nature, and at a distance from the tumults of society would resign himself to visions of moral beauty, of perfect loveliness, and of sublime virtue, unknown on earth, — who is conscious of the capacities of human nature for what is good and great, and desires, under the kindest influences of the universe, to call forth into new life these high principles in his own soul.

“On descending to this sweet lake, I felt my spirit stilled, as if I were throwing off the robe of this world’s cares and passions, and escaping into a region of more than human purity and peace, without, however, losing my human sympathies.

“The lake has not left, perhaps, very definite traces of figure, &c., on my mind, for in such a scene the mind is not stimulated to analyze. The heart and imagination are too absorbed for curious observation. It is rather circular, and wants the multiplied diversities of outline, the points, bays, recesses of Windermere, and this, perhaps, aids its effect, for the eye is not excited to wander in search of beauties half hid in mazy openings. The soul is free to receive an unmixed impression from the simple, harmonious scene. When it is said that the surrounding mountains are bold, some precipitous, and one of them a rugged steep, seamed with storms and strewed with rocky fragments, it may seem strange that the lake

can have the character of mild repose which has been ascribed to it; but, spreading as it does in a circle, it so parts the surrounding mountains, that they cannot be grouped as if they bordered a narrower stream, and thus they become subordinate accompaniments to, instead of being the chief features of, the prospect. Then the immediate shore of the lake is level and verdant, and blends singularly with the peaceful water. This is particularly true with respect to the vale, properly so called, which spreads between the head of Grassmere and Helm's Crag, whose surface is almost as unbroken as the lake, and which, clothed as it is with the freshest verdure, varied by hedgerows, and combining with its natural beauty the most affecting tokens of humanity by its simple cottages and Gothic churches, communicates an inexpressible character of peace and benignity, and of gentle and holy sweetness, to the whole scene. The mountains thus severed from one another, and rising from so peaceful a foundation, seem exalted only to guard the sacred seclusion of the lake from the profanation of worldly passions, that it may hold pure intercourse with the mild and pure sky, which it reflects so tranquilly, with the glorious sun, and the genial breezes. In such spots we can hardly help believing in a better existence than this, for we seem to have entered its confines. A faith springs up, not the less sincere or unreal because the growth of sentiment, a faith in the high purposes of our being, and our capacity of purer joys than we experience in our ordinary modes of life.

“There is a melancholy in visiting such scenes as I have now described; but is this their direct and natural effect, or does it spring from a silent consciousness of the difference between our perturbed state and the intense quiet of soul breathed into us by such a spot? We feel Grassmere to be a shelter; but a shelter includes the idea of the storms of passion. Thus a sad sense of our actual being mingles with aspirations for a higher existence; but this sadness is so tempered and subdued by the power of the beautiful scene, that it becomes a tender, grateful, melancholy feeling. A more delicious state of heart and mind than comes from those blended emotions is, perhaps, unknown to human nature. . . . .

“I was not so deeply impressed by any mountain as by Skiddaw, which is the more remarkable, as having nothing of the wild character that I have noticed in the other mountains. Its distinction is tranquil majesty. It rises gradually and with extensive sweeps from the valley, and its outline is more flowing than that of any of its numberless associates. Yet, so bold are the swells on its



surface ; its valleys, if we may so call them, open such broad expanses to the eye ; its summits stretch along the horizon with such generous freedom ; and it towers with an expression of such spontaneous energy, that, whilst we rest on its mildness with delight, the mind is dilated with a feeling of its grandeur. No sublimity is so real as that which makes itself deeply felt in union with beauty ; just as the highest moral greatness is that which, whilst it awes by unshaken constancy of principle, at the same time attracts us by the gentleness of love. Wild scenes, where power is manifested in desolation, act at first with great force on the mind, especially on the least refined ; but power and goodness are congenial, and the highest manifestations of power are benignant. The power which reveals itself solemnly amidst beauty, by this very circumstance shows its grandeur, and acquires a more enduring sway over the soul. I found myself never wearied with Skiddaw. It lifted my spirit. Scenes of ruin are apt to subdue us ; but the highest forms of sublimity exalt us, by inspiring a consciousness of kindred might. And such was the influence of this mountain. It made the lake and all surrounding objects its ministers. The mists were rolling tranquilly over its summits, partial lights were wandering across its face, and it seemed in full harmony with the noblest agents and elements of nature. . . .

“There is one most happy effect, which should be particularly noticed. Distance, the atmosphere, fogs, and various lights, give to the tops of mountains a visionary, sometimes a mysterious character, better felt than described, which forms a most interesting contrast with the general massiveness of their foundations. These awful forms seem to be spiritualized as they ascend, till they blend with the pure heavens, and sometimes through the thin mist almost melt into air. This union of the firmness of earth with the ethereal brightness of the skies gives a peculiar charm to mountains. In fact, they unite remarkably opposite expressions. By their foundations they seem to sink into the earth, and our thoughts are carried to its gloomiest depths, whilst their tops aspire to heaven, and dwell in a region of peace and splendor. Whilst we are impressed by the huge bulk and weight of their inert forms, their visionary tops give them the appearance of belonging to the pure element in which they live, of possessing a congenial spirit with the free and buoyant air, and of having risen through their own life and energy to hold communion with the sun.”

We have already seen the reverent affection with which Mr. Channing regarded Wordsworth, and it will be readily understood, therefore, that he joyfully availed himself of this opportunity to

seek an interview with the poet. In a letter to a sister he thus describes his visit :—

“ I could not but think of the amusement I should have afforded you, could you have taken a peep at me. I had spent Sunday morning at Grassmere, — one of the sweetest and most peace-breathing spots under the skies, — and in the afternoon, being unable to attend church, I resolved to visit Mr. Wordsworth, who resides two miles and a half from the inn. Unluckily, Grassmere, whilst it supplied the wants of the imagination and heart most abundantly, could not supply me with any vehicle for the body more easy or dignified than a cart, dragged by a horse who had caught nothing of the grace of the surrounding scene.

“ After an interview of great pleasure and interest, I set out to return, and, unwilling to lose Mr. Wordsworth’s society, I accepted his proposition that we should walk together until I was fatigued. At the end of half a mile my strength began to fail, and finding my companion still earnest in conversation, I invited him to take a seat with me, which he did ; and in this state we re-entered the delightful valley. Happily the air was mild, and I began to think that Providence, in distributing lots, had not been so severe as one might at first be inclined to feel, in limiting multitudes to such a mode of conveyance ; for I enjoyed the fine prospects of Rydal and Grassmere as I could not have done in a covered carriage.

“ You, perhaps, might have promised me the honor of being introduced with the cart and horse into a ‘ lyrical ballad.’ But to me, who, as you know, profess to be greatly in debt to Mr. Wordsworth’s genius, and whose respect and affection were heightened by personal intercourse, there seemed a peculiar felicity in riding through this scene of surpassing tenderness with a man of genius and sensibility, who had caught inspiration from the lakes and mountains, in whose beauty I too had been rejoicing.

“ Mr. Wordsworth’s conversation was free, various, animated. We talked so eagerly as often to interrupt one another. And as I descended into Grassmere near sunset, with the placid lake before me, and Wordsworth talking and reciting poetry with a poet’s spirit by my side, I felt that the combination of circumstances was such as my highest hopes could never have anticipated.”

Twenty years after this sunset ride, an American traveller was visiting Wordsworth, when the poet incidentally mentioned this interview, and said that one remark then made by Dr. Channing had remained fixed in his memory, and all the more deeply from the impressive tone of sincere feeling with which it was uttered. It was

to this effect, — “that one great evidence of the Divine origin of Christianity was, that it contained nothing which rendered it unadapted to a progressive state of society, that it put no checks upon the activity of the human mind, and did not compel it to tread always blindly in a beaten path.”

From Wordsworth our thoughts are led by an association, which time and change can never break, to his great compeer, Coleridge, whom Mr. Channing saw while in London during the following summer. And as there is nothing in the few notes of his rapid journey through England of especial interest, we will pass at once to a brief notice of this visit. Most fortunately, we are enabled to enrich our pages with Coleridge's own record of it, as given in the following letter to Washington Allston.

“HIGHGATE, 13th June, 1823.

“MY FRIEND, — It was more than a gratification, it was a great comfort, to all of us, to see, sit, walk, and converse with two such dear and dearly respected friends of yours as Mr. and Mrs. Channing.

“Mr. Channing I could not be said not to have known in part before. It is enough to add, that the reality differed from my previous conception of it only by being more amiable, more discriminating, and more free from prejudices, than my experience had permitted me to anticipate. His affection for the good as the good, and his earnestness for the true as the true, — with that harmonious subordination of the latter to the former, without encroachment on the absolute worth of either, — present in him a character which, in my heart's heart, I believe to be the very rarest in earth. If you will excuse a play on words in speaking of such a man, I will say that Mr. Channing is a philosopher in both the possible renderings of the word. He has the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love.

“I was unfortunately absent the first evening. Had they been prevented from repeating their visit, I should have been vexed indeed, and yet not as much vexed as I now know I should have had reason to be. I feel convinced that the few differences in opinion between Mr. Channing and myself not only are, but would by him be found to be, apparent, not real, — the same truth seen in different relations. Perhaps I have been more absorbed in the depth of the mystery of the spiritual life, he more engrossed by the loveliness of its manifestations.”

Mr. Channing had long been an admiring reader of what Coleridge had printed, and no words are needed to describe the pleasure



with which, in common with all auditors, he listened to the fascinating monologue of the poet-philosopher, who had then entered upon certainly the most serene, and probably the most brilliant, period of his life. It seems, however, from the foregoing letter, that he conversed enough to leave a distinct image of himself.

From England Mr. Channing went to Paris, where he passed but a few weeks, and then, journeying leisurely through France, entered Switzerland by the Jura. He was too unwell to avail himself freely of the rich opportunities for enjoyment so amply afforded by that most picturesque and romantic country ; but a few extracts from his letters will show that bodily weakness could not deaden his spiritual energy.

“ *Geneva, Sept. 28, 1822.* I find that I hardly knew the power of mountain scenery until I came hither, although I have not seen the noblest of the Alps, for I have not yet visited Mont Blanc, but only caught glimpses of his snowy top at a distance, half wrapt in clouds. You probably know that the mountains of Switzerland are not distinguished by beauty of form, when taken separately. The storms have dealt with them too fiercely and too long, to leave them the fine outline which I have seen in our own country and in England. Their summits generally are rugged, naked, shattered crags ; and you sometimes see the perpendicular, sharp rocks towering into the skies, above the everlasting snows which rest on the projecting surfaces beneath. It is not their harmonious proportion, then, but the air of awful power impressed upon them, — the perilous precipices by which they are bounded, the boldness with which they send up to heaven their wild tops, the prodigality and confusion with which they are scattered around, and the immense glaciers shining, without apparent change or dissolution, under the summer’s snow, — which subdue the traveller creeping at their foot. These constitute the deep, solemn, mysterious charm that attracts the eye to gaze upon these giant forms. . . .

“ Do you not envy me the beautiful, magnificent scenery which is now stretching around me? I shall never forget the day I spent at Berne. It was Sunday, and in the afternoon, under a most brilliant sky, I walked on the ramparts, and hailed with joy, as old friends, the mountains in the horizon which I had visited a few days before. All that nature can do to lift us above the sordid and selfish is done in Switzerland ; and who can doubt that, where there is a deep purpose in the soul to elevate itself, much aid may be derived from the sublimity of the external world? But without this purpose and inward effort, it can do little for us. Switzerland has benefited my health more than any other country. The air has been exhilar-

rating, and I have looked on the mountains with a delight which almost gave me strength to climb them. . . .

“It is worth no little suffering to cross the Wengern Alp, and scale the Grimsel. I had strength for neither. With what desire did I look to the Jungfrau! If I revisit Switzerland, one of my great pleasures will be to approach its base. This country has inspired me. I grew better almost as soon as I entered it.”

The winter months were passed by Mr. and Mrs. Channing at Florence, Rome, and Naples. But as his letters and journals — written in haste, debility, and, as we shall presently see, in affliction — contain no descriptions of scenery or places which are particularly noteworthy, we will proceed at once to extract from his papers some general reflections upon society, which he seems to have preserved as hints for future thought. It is scarcely necessary to suggest, that, to one of his humane spirit, men and manners, the condition of the masses of the people, the tendency of governments, the influence of institutions, presented objects of interest far surpassing all that beauty in nature and art could offer.

“Has not every state of society a spirit, a *unity*? Do not its parts cohere? Can we judge of one habit, one trait of manners, one institution alone? Must not the *system* be understood, the *central* principles, the great *ends* to which the community is working? Are not a nation’s whole tone of manners and cast of institutions the workings and manifestations of some law of life, combining the whole? Must there not be a secret accordance between the different parts of a nation’s character and modes of living? Is there as much of an arbitrary character in these as we are apt to imagine? Is not the interior life the great thing to be inspected, the form of human nature which is presented in the given case? . . . .

“The art of travelling is, to unite minute observation with large comparison, with penetrating insight into the spirit of which visible modes of life are the body. The traveller should have the power of recognizing the common bond, principle, spring, aim, of the infinitely multifarious agencies composing what we call a nation. . . . .

“We must not depend on a people to show us what is most worthy of our attention; for they are actually unconscious of what is most important, *their own spirit*, and the influences by and from which it has been formed and is kept alive. . . . .

“A great object in travelling is to discover by comparison what is primary and universal in our nature, to separate the adventitious, secondary, temporary, to learn the deep principles on which all permanent improvements are to rest, to behold and to love what is

*human*, to shake off our prejudices in favor of the unessential modifications of our nature, and to recognize the *essential* through these modifications. . . .

“To go abroad that we may see the unessential, — new modes of dressing, eating, bowing, the exterior of man and life, — is a mere wasting of time. We should go to enlarge our views of human nature, to learn what it can do and suffer, to what it is equal, under what influences its powers are most developed, by what most crushed. The noblest use of travelling is, to discern more of the godlike in the human; and are there not marks, in the most degraded condition of society, of man’s true glory? We may see at least some evil influences withstood, resisted, which shows an inward power not subdued, nor capable of subjection, by the most adverse circumstances. This power of seeing vital good is the true eye for a traveller. To visit distant countries only to collect mementos of the deformities of human nature, to fill our memory with images of the misshapen exterior under which humanity lies almost hidden, is worse than useless. We should strive to perceive, beneath the distortions of our nature, its real shape, its primitive tendencies towards good. He who travels without learning to love his race more, would do far better to stay at home. It is a poor business to rake into the corruptions of human nature, unless one believes in its capacity for restoration, and approaches its defilements only to cleanse them. A good man should turn from irremediable evils. To *love*, is our work. . . .

“Civil society abounds in *restraints* on our nature, where *development* should be the great aim. How little is now done to remove barriers to human powers and affections! The order of society has been thought to demand subordination, subjection, force, artificial manners, badges of different castes, — all cramping the soul. . . .

“Fashion is a chain on the soul. It is a yoke laid by superiors on inferiors, through opinion. It disposes of our time, attention, powers. It puts the stamp of worth, dignity, happiness, on actions and conditions, and prevents us from judging for ourselves. Originating with those who are raised above natural wants, and in whom the spirit of self-sacrifice is lost in self-indulgence, it gives currency to factitious, selfish pursuits and enjoyments. Thus the mind is perverted, contracted, filled with false views, and grows mechanical, torpid, lifeless. A society is improved in proportion as individuals judge for themselves, and from their own experience and feeling, and not according to general opinion. A man should look to his own soul to learn what makes him happiest, and to decide when he



is conscious of acting most *in harmony with his whole nature*. But how few do so! . . . .

“Genius is a liberating power. It accords with nature, detects natural feeling in the artificial arrangements of society, and discerns and enjoys the beautiful and lovely in our natural affections and moral sentiments. Thus a literature of genius withstands corruption, brings back higher minds to nature, counteracts fashion. . . .

“A society is advanced in proportion as human nature is respected. It is the misery of the present state, that man, *as man*, is counted of so little worth. It is man clothed in purple, dressed in a little brief authority, high-born, rich, &c., who is now considered as deserving power. A just estimate of human nature, of its purposes, powers, destiny, leading to general courtesy, respect, and effort for the advancement of this nature, in each and all, — this is the measure of the progress of society. When manners, and especially the *intercourse between different classes*, express this, society is truly flourishing. . . .

“The existence of a large class, cut off from the rest of the community, trained up to ignorance and vice, gross in manners, in no degree acted upon by other classes, and repressed only by brute force, is a sad feature of civilized society, and a reproach on more favored orders. The true organization of society is that in which all improvements of the higher are communicated to the lower classes, and in which intellect and virtue descend and are diffused. And will anything but Christianity, moulding anew the whole spirit of the higher classes, bring about this end? . . . .

“The influence of government is of great importance in judging of the state of society. A good government is that which, by manifesting a common, wide, universal care, diffuses a generous, impartial, disinterested spirit. A society is well organized, whose government recognizes the claims and rights of *all*, has no favorites, respects humanity in all its forms, and aims to direct the pursuits of *each to the general good*. Such a government implies the existence of a disinterested spirit in the community, and greatly strengthens it. This reaction is the most interesting view in public affairs. A society makes progress just as far as a disinterested spirit, influencing the members, is embodied and manifested in institutions, laws, tribunals, and through these flows back with new energy to individuals. This is the highest end of government, its sublime, moral end. . . .

“Liberty is the great social good, — exemption from unjust restraints, — freedom to act, to exert powers of usefulness. Does a government advance this simply by establishing equal *laws*? The

very protection of property may crush a large mass of the community, may give the rich a monopoly in land, may take from the poor all means of action. Liberty is a blessing only by setting man's powers at large, exciting, quickening them. A poor man, in the present state of society, may be a slave, by his entire dependence. Is it not the true end of government, to aim at securing for all the widest field of useful action? This is to establish *liberty*. How far more important is this than to protect any single class! . . .

"The poor, weak, helpless, suffering, are the first objects for the care of government. Society improves in proportion as they are protected in the exercise of their rights. These high views of government, as a sacred institution for elevating all classes of men, are essential to an exalted community. Where government is considered as a prize for selfish ambition, society becomes degraded. . . .

"The best condition of society is that in which all ranks, classes, orders, are intimately connected and associated. The deformity of present society is the separation of ranks, the immense disparity, the inhuman distance of different orders. All men cannot be equal in all respects; but the high should feel their elevation to be a motive and obligation to labor for inferiors.

"There must be a body of enlightened, studious men. Let not these form a party, a faction, but consider their light as a good given to be diffused, and as a means to maintain an improving intercourse among all orders. So there will be rich men; but the rich, instead of herding together, and linking themselves to one another by common pleasures, privileges, refinements, ought to regard property as a *trust* for the good of those who are in want. Let there be no literary *class*, no *class* of rich. The learned, when forming a distinct class, become jealous, exacting, domineering, and seek to maintain their sway, even at the expense of truth. Scholars already begin to find the benefit of quitting their pedantic cells and mingling with general society; but still they associate too much with rich and refined,—still they seek honor and power. Their high office, of being lights to society, is overlooked. How the rich injure themselves by a clannish spirit, corrupting one another by rivalry in show and expense! Christianity breaks down all these walls of division between man and man."

But the scenery, works of art, institutions, and social tendencies of the Old World could not wean Mr. Channing's affections from his home; and the following extract from one of his letters manifests the tender solicitude with which he sought, while far away, to exert a good influence over his children:—

“*London, Aug. 8, 1822.* In the first place, I wish my children to be simple, natural, without affectation. Children are often injured for life by the notice taken of their movements, tones, sayings, which leads them to repeat what draws attention, and to act from love of observation, instead of following the impulses of nature. A child should never be tempted to put on pretty airs, or to think of itself and its looks. I have wished my children always to act in a free, natural, unstudied way, without the idea or desire of being observed, and, on this account, have been very willing to keep them out of society, where they might have been taught, by injudicious notice, to turn their thoughts upon themselves, and to assume the manners which they would have seen to attract attention. The charm of infancy is its perfect artlessness, and the immediate communication between its feelings and actions. I would prefer that my children should have any degree of awkwardness, rather than form an artificial style of conduct; for the first evil may be outgrown, but affectation is seldom or never cured.

“The next particular to be mentioned is closely connected with this. I wish my children to be honest, sincere, and undisguised, to tell the truth at all perils and under all circumstances. I have always kept this in sight, endeavoring, in my whole intercourse with them, to avoid the slightest appearance of art or disguise. Children must *never be deceived*. . . . I am persuaded that the artifices of children, which we charge on nature, are very often imitations of the cunning practices of those about them. I would have an intercourse of entire frankness established with children. They should never have reason to suspect that there is the least disagreement between our feelings and outward signs. If we are unwilling to disclose anything, we should say so, and not use indirect means to hide it; and we should encourage them to the same explicitness. We should never invite them to express more affection than they really feel, or to lavish marks of fondness, when they wish to employ themselves about something else. It is better that they should *seem* cold than *be* insincere. Nor should they be taught, as a part of politeness, to use lightly the language of affection. Whenever they give their opinion, they should be encouraged to do it fully, freely, and not be tempted to soften or color it because it may happen to differ from our own or that of others. They should talk always from their own minds, and not from other people's. This transparency in children is undoubtedly sometimes unpleasant. Yet when connected, as it always should be, with the culture of the kind affections, it gradually ripens into an ingenuous, considerate frankness, which expresses the real convictions of the mind, with-



out inflicting unnecessary pain, and becomes one of the chief beauties of our social nature."

Such was the watchful care with which he endeavored to surround his little girl and boys with gentle and purifying influences. But one of them was never to learn on earth the riches of a parent's love. Almost while he was writing the last lines, his youngest son had died. He received the intelligence of this calamity on his arrival at Rome, and nothing could have been more beautiful than his acquiescence in this irreparable loss. The same letters which conveyed the sad tidings announced also that a beloved sister-in-law had been taken away; and, in his reply, he thus touchingly speaks of the twofold bereavement:—

"*Rome, Dec. 18, 1822.* I reached this place yesterday, and found here the package of letters containing the melancholy accounts of Walter's loss and of my own. I am afflicted indeed. God has visited me with the heaviest loss I can experience, save one. My sweet, lovely boy! Is he indeed gone? and am I no more to see that smile which to me and to his mother was like a beam from heaven? He was a most gentle creature. I can remember his occasional cries of distress, but never one of passion. My health did not allow me to carry and play with him, as I had been in the habit of doing with my other infants; but when I was amusing myself with Mary and William, he would creep to me and climb up into my lap, and win from me, by his benignant smile, the notice which I was giving to them. The accounts we had received of him before this last sad news were most encouraging, and we were anticipating the happy moment when we should take him to our arms and press him to our hearts with a delight he had never given us before. And he is gone! and when we return, if that blessing is in store for us, we shall look for him in vain! O, the void in a parent's heart, when a child is taken, you do not know! and may you never know it! You are a mother; and, to a mother, the pang is what a father seldom feels. I think much more of my wife than of myself, her feelings on the subject of our children have been so keen. . . .

"Do not think, my dear, from what I have written, that I am in danger of dejection. I suffer; but I have never forgotten that my child belonged to another and better parent, and was made for a higher state than this. I am sure that he was equally the care of God in death as in life. I cannot believe that the necessary means of educating an immortal spirit are confined to this world. I remember that comforting scripture, 'Of *such* is the kingdom of

Heaven'; and my hope is, that my child has gone to live under a more intimate connection than we can now conceive with Him who took little children into his arms and blessed them. Nor do I believe that the relation of parent and child is dissolved by death. In the whole progress of our future being, we must always, I think, look back with peculiar interest on the moment when we *began* to be, and must, I think, distinguish with some peculiar emotion those who, under Providence, brought us into life, and who welcomed and loved and cherished us in our first helplessness with intense and unwearied affection. Death is not that wide gulf between us and the departed which we are apt to imagine. . . . Francis, Ann, my child, and our beloved Barbara, are gone from us, but are not lost to us.

"At the mention of Barbara's name, I feel as if I had been unjust in dwelling so long on my more immediate affliction. I know no greater bereavement than Walter's. I would speak of my own loss in Barbara's death, but that his so much surpasses it. She was one of the loveliest of women and best of wives. All the graces and virtues were joined in her so harmoniously, her excellence was so singularly unalloyed, so far from the mixtures and defects which we have to lament in most of our friends, that I dwell on her with a peculiar complacency. Seldom does a gentler, purer, more benignant, more disinterested spirit take its flight from earth to heaven. Her countenance, conversation, life, sent forth a sweet and blessed influence. And she, too, is gone, and I am to see this lovely and beloved sister no more on earth!"

And again to his mother he thus writes, under date of January 2d, 1823:—

"Of our dear boy we had heard nothing but good, and his loss was a blow as unexpected as it was heavy. He was a treasure worth more to us than the world. His sweet, gentle temper not only made him a present blessing, but encouraged us to hope that he would need only the mildest influences to sway him to goodness, and that he would make us the happiest returns of love for our parental care. To part with this lovely, smiling, innocent boy, to whom we hoped to do so much good, and whose attachment and progress we imagined were to brighten our future lives, this is indeed to be bereaved. . . .

"— expressed a fear that I should suffer in health by the sad news from home. No! even had I not the supports of Christian principle, I should find motives enough in my situation and affections for watching over my health. I feel my distance from home

more deeply than ever, and have hardly a thought or a wish, as regards this world, but of returning to it; and knowing, as I do, that this depends on recovering my strength, I am almost too solicitous in using the means to this end. . . .

“You and my mother Gibbs have suffered much by our late domestic trials. Our absence seems to us a great evil, by depriving us of the opportunities of rendering those offices of filial love of which we never knew the full value until we were parents ourselves. It is our constant prayer, that God would preserve you both, and would increase our power of contributing to your happiness. Absence has endeared all our friends to us, but none more than our parents. I sometimes wonder, now, that we were capable of tearing ourselves from you all. In a world so transient and uncertain, a year seems too much time to be spent at a distance from one’s home. Do give the assurances of my love to all our dear circle. I cannot begin to name the friends to whom I wish to send affectionate remembrance. I am too rich in these blessings to be able to count them, and distance only makes them more precious.

“Your affectionate son.”

And, finally, in his journals, he thus communes with his own spirit and with God:—

“*Rome, Jan. 1823.* How unavailing is foresight in the most important transactions of life! We would lengthen life for our children, and they are taken before us. . . .

“In the moment of affliction, the thought sometimes comes to us with an almost overwhelming vividness of our *entire* dependence. The hour which has taken one blessing can take more. All our possessions begin to tremble, when one very dear is taken. The loss of one child makes prominent the frailty of all. The bloom of health fades as we look upon it. O, how desolate we may be made in a moment! and how wretched would be our condition, if the Power which disposes of us were not benevolent!

“When I think of my child, of its beauty and sweetness, of the tenderness he awakened, of the spirit which God had breathed into him, and which had begun to develop itself, I cannot doubt that he was the care of God in death, as in life. He was made for God; had he lived, my chief duty would have been to direct him to that Infinite Good,—and has he not now gone to Him from whom he came? Is it not a most interesting view of death, that it removes in a great degree the intermediate provisions, the external means by which God communicates benefits, and thus places us in a more immediate and visible connection with Him? Is it not the happi-



ness of heaven, that spirits see God, not only as reflected in his works, but face to face? God used *our* arms to sustain our child; has he not taken him to a world where he will lean more immediately on *His own*?

“When I consider how interesting a moment the beginning of existence is to a reasonable being, how infinite the abyss between non-existence and existence, I feel that we must always look back to the moment and circumstances of our birth with peculiar emotions, and that the beings to whom, under God, we owed our life, who were the instruments of Providence in giving us bodily existence and watching over the feeble spark, who were the first to welcome and to love us, must always seem to be among our chief benefactors. Will not the parental relation thus be a bond of union, a source of happiness, forever? The foundling sighs to know his parents with eager and burning desire. Is not this filial affection an instinct of the rational and moral nature which will act through all the future?

“Our child is lost to our sight, but not to our faith and hope, — perhaps not to our beneficent influence. Is there no means of gratifying our desire of promoting his happiness? The living and dead make one communion. ‘Why born only to die?’ Birth establishes a connection with the human race. His birth made our boy one of a great spiritual family, and intimately united him with a few. Will not his eternal being be influenced by this connection? . . .

“The loss of a child is, indeed, one of the greatest which a mortal can experience, — the loss of an object of such tender love, of a being possessing the noblest powers, which we had hoped to see unfolding beneath our care, to whom we had longed to do more good than to any other being, and from whom we had anticipated receiving the most consoling and rejoicing returns of love. Surely the affections excited by the parental relation bear a resemblance to those by which God is united to his creatures.”

How much the vivid sense of his own loss, and the depth of love thus opened in his heart towards his children, added warmth to the reverent gratitude by which he was bound to his mother, appears by the following letter.

“*Florence, April 7, 1823.* When you look at the date of my letter, you will see that I am writing you on my *birthday*; and, on this day, to whom could I write with so much reason as to you? — for to you, as well as to me, it is a memorable period. When I think of the beginning of my existence, how natural is it that my thoughts should turn to one whose kindness towards me then com-

menced, and who has given me through my whole life proofs of increasing love! I can hardly suppress my tears, as I feel the tender relation which my birth established between us; and now that I am so far from you, while I remember your declining years, it is consoling to me to reflect, that, amidst many deficiencies, I have not proved wholly insensible to the claims of your affection.

“On this day, I feel that I have cause to give God thanks for the blessing of existence. My life, though no exception to the common lot, though checkered with good and evil, has, on the whole, been singularly favored. Without any care or forethought of my own, my outward condition has been almost too favorable, and the comforts of life have been multiplied upon me, not only beyond my hopes, but beyond my wishes. As to those best blessings of this world, *friends* worthy of love, I know not who has been richer than I; and as to the chief crowning good, not only of this, but of the life to come, I mean *religion*, I seem to myself to have been placed in circumstances highly favorable, at least, to the understanding of the Christian faith in its greatest purity. How far I have practised it, with what feelings I review my conduct, and the progress of my character,—these are topics on which silence is wisdom. To another Being I have to render my account; and our poor, weak, sinful nature can hardly look back on a life as long as my own without emotions which can be fitly uttered to Him alone.”

The wanderer's face was now turned again to his native land. He had faithfully sought renewed health by rest, and travel amidst interesting scenes; he had enjoyed and learned as much of good as, in his bodily and mental condition, he was capable of receiving; and now he was free to return; and he thus alludes to the deep satisfaction with which he looked forward to a reunion with his friends:—

“Need I say with what pleasure I write to you from this place? Florence is on my way *home*, and though I am still very, very far from you, the thought of making some progress towards you is an inexpressible consolation. . . . Return seems almost too great a happiness to be anticipated. . . .

“I have said nothing of the feelings with which I turn towards home. My heart swells within me as I approach this subject. And why should I speak of it? Need I say where my affections cling?—how my heart yearns for the native land I have left?—how you are remembered in my prayers by night and by day?

O, no! My dear mother, once more, farewell! May your life and health be spared! May we meet again!"

On the last day of his voyage to America, he made these entries in his journal: —

"I have just seen *land*. Blessed be God! In a few hours I hope to meet my friends. What thanks are due! Let me now, on approaching shore, humbly purpose, in God's strength, that I will strive to do his will more perseveringly, to be more useful, watchful, temperate, kind, devout, than ever before."

"I am returned to my friends; let me be more to them than I have yet been, more attentive, thoughtful, social, seeking their cheerfulness, interesting myself in their concerns. Especially let me be more to my mother."

The following letter to a sister will best show his feelings after his return: —

"MY DEAR L., — How happy I am to write to you again from my beloved home! Join with me in gratitude to our merciful Father, who has guarded me and our dear R—— by sea and land, and brought us back to you all. We did, indeed, see and feel, on our return, that we had been visited by an irreparable calamity, and for a moment our loss almost made us forget the blessings which are spared to us. But I am now awake as I never was before to their number and value. My happiness has been almost overpowering, too great to endure in a world made up of changes, and too great, I know, for the purposes of Providence towards me. My health is very much improved; and the voyage, from which I anticipated the prostration of my whole system, proved very beneficial. Among my many blessings was the good account I received of you and yours."

And on the Sunday after his arrival, he thus poured out the fulness of his heart: —

"Those of you, my hearers, who have travelled abroad, and left far behind, and for a long time, home, friends, familiar haunts, spheres of usefulness, and employments congenial to your tastes, — you can understand the fervent gratitude which glows in my heart to-day. True, the moment of return to one's native land does not bring unmixed happiness; for too often we re-enter our long-forsaken dwellings only to miss cherished objects of affection, to see the hand of time pressing heavily on our earliest, oldest friends, to receive sad answers respecting acquaintances, to revive griefs in those who have been called to mourn in our absence, and thus to



have the solemn lesson of life's changes brought with new power to our minds. Still, the moment of return after a long and distant separation is, though not without tears, most blessed. To set foot once again on our native shore, where we grew up, and where our best affections have taken root, — to re-enter the abodes where the tenderest ties were formed, and have gathered strength, — to feel ourselves once more at home, that spot over which the heart throws a light such as shines nowhere else upon earth, — to see again the countenances of friends whose forms have gone with us in memory through distant regions, — to feel the embrace of those arms on which we have leaned in our past hours of sorrow and pleasure, — to read in the eyes of those around us a love, which no kindness of strangers can ever express, — to exchange the constraints, reserves, suspicions, which can hardly be shaken off in foreign lands, for the sweet confidence, the free and full communion, the opening of the heart, which belong to domestic life, — to know that the lives for which we have trembled, the beings in whose existence our chief earthly happiness is centred, are safe, — O, this is joy! joy such as blooms rarely in this imperfect state. To this hour of return my mind has pressed forward ever since I left you. Amid the new and glorious scenes through which God has led me, amid matchless beauties of nature and wonders of art, my own dear country has risen before me with undiminished interest and brightness. And invisible ties have reached across the ocean, growing stronger by distance, and welcoming me back to the loves, the friendships, the joys, the duties, the opportunities of home."

## PART THIRD.

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### CHAPTER I.—THE MINISTRY AND LITERATURE.

IT was in August, 1823, that Dr. CHANNING<sup>1</sup> had the joy of once more standing amid the circle of loving friends, parishioners, acquaintances, who waited to welcome him. For a short season he retired into the country, and then recommenced his public labors with a freshness and fervor that showed the new spiritual energy with which he was consciously quickened. Among the animating scenes presented by Europe, so various and rich in suggestion, and especially in the long night-watches and perfect repose of his homeward voyage, during which he experienced an unwonted exaltation and transparency of mind, he had found leisure to review the past, to cast off many shackles of custom and prejudice, to learn distinctly his own function, to comprehend the spirit and tendencies of modern society, and, above all, to commune more nearly than ever before with God. This year of absence had been, unawares to himself, perhaps, a transition period. Thenceforward was to open a new era of life, — an era freer and brighter, more buoyant in hope, more large in love, than even his enthusiastic youth at Richmond, and far more beautiful in its serene confidence, its tempered wisdom, its all-pervading holiness and humanity. The thick-clustered blossoms of his early aspiration had given a promise, truly kept, of branches bending to the ground beneath the mellow fruit of ripened goodness.

We are now to trace the widening influence of Dr. Channing's later life; and there is no better way of forming a true conception of the diffusive sympathy, the careful and capacious thought, the ready and exuberant, yet calm and equable, energy which characterized it, than to follow him in turn through each of the great spheres of interest in which he was called to act. Commencing, then, with his more special function as a preacher and a writer, we

<sup>1</sup> He had received the title of Doctor of Divinity from Harvard University in 1820.

will contemplate his course progressively in relation to social reform, to the anti-slavery movement, and to politics ; finally, we will look in upon the quiet beauty of his daily life in the Boston and Newport home, which he had re-entered, as we have seen, with such overflowing affection.

His first address to his people, after his return from Europe, will exhibit the high and solemn views which he cherished in relation to the ministry.

*August, 1823.* “Through the mercy of our Heavenly Father, I am allowed once again to address you ; and let me open this new period of my ministerial life by paying my tribute of gratitude to Him in whom all our works should begin and end. To God, my creator and preserver, my guide through the pathless seas, my friend among strangers, my guardian in peril, my strength in sickness, who has permitted me to see his glorious works, and has brought me back in safety to a beloved home, — to God, who has chastened and comforted me, who has spoken peace to my wounded spirit, and has spared to me so many friends, — to God, who has heard my prayers, who has placed me once more in the midst of an affectionate people, and restored me to the church which he has intrusted to my care, — to God, whose undeserved, unwearied, unfailling goodness passeth all understanding, whose love is the sweetness of all blessings, whose providence is our continual stay, whose grace is our unfailling hope, — I would make the only return which a creature can render, by bearing witness to his goodness, and giving myself up to his service with joyful, trustful, thankful, perfect devotion.

“In this house, consecrated to his honor, in the presence of his people, I now renew the dedication of myself to God, of my whole being, life, thought, powers, faculties, affections, influence, of all which he has given and upholds. Let these lips speak his praise, this heart glow with his love, this strength be spent in doing his will ! May I serve him better than I have done, with purer aims, with simpler purposes, with a soul more penetrated by his perfection, and with success worthy of his cause ! I know my infirmity, and cannot forget the lifeless services which have too frequently been offered by me. But I would hope that the recent ordinations of his providence, that the lessons of dependence which have been learned in sickness and affliction, and that his preserving and restoring goodness, will produce some better fruit than a transient sensibility, will issue in a profound, tender sense of obligation, and in a firm purpose of duty. We know that one great end of the



mysterious mixture of evil and good in our present lot is, to draw us to God, to break our spiritual slumber, to soften our obduracy, and to change, through the blended influences of penitence and thankfulness, of sorrow and joy, our faint convictions into powerful principles. My friends, join with me in prayer to God, that to all his other gifts he will add the highest gift of his holy spirit, — so that, strengthened to resist the selfish propensities which enslave the bad, and make good men groan, I may show forth in my whole life a fervent spirit, and thus communicate awakening influences to my people. For it is not as a private individual, and not to relieve a burdened heart, that I speak here so largely of God's goodness. Were I alone concerned, I should not thus lay open my soul. But conscious that my chief work in life is to act upon other minds, and to act through sympathy as well as instruction, I feel that you have an interest in the utterance and in the increase of my devout affections. God grant, for your sake as well as my own, that they may be living and growing! . . . .

“On this occasion, you will not expect from me a review of what I have seen and heard during my absence; but this I will say, that I have discovered nothing to obscure the claims of Christianity. I have learned no name mightier than that of Jesus, have found no new system of religion, no new institution for improving the character, no new method of salvation, among the schools of philosophy or the establishments of policy, to shake my persuasion of the paramount excellence of the gospel. On this point I return unchanged, unless to be more deeply convinced of the unspeakable worth of our religion be a change. I have seen human nature in new circumstances, but everywhere the same in its essential principles, and everywhere needing the same encouragements, consolations, inspiring and redeeming influences. Whilst, on other subjects, early impressions were corrected or effaced, I never for a moment have suspected that Christianity was an hereditary, local prejudice, — never have found that it was passing out of sight in proportion as I changed the sky under which I was born. Like the sun, I have seen it shining above all lands, undiminished in brightness, and everywhere it has beamed forth as the true, the only light of the world. . . . .

“I return with views of society which make me rejoice, as I never did before, in the promise held out by revealed religion of a *moral renovation* of the world. I expect less and less from revolutions, political changes, violent struggles, — from public men or public measures, — in a word, from any outward modification of society. Corrupt institutions will be succeeded by others equally,

if not more, corrupt, whilst the root or principle lives in the heart of individuals and nations ; and the only remedy is to be found in a moral change, to which Christianity, and the Divine power that accompanies it, are alone adequate. The voice of prophecy, announcing a purer, happier state of the world, under the holy and peaceful influences of Jesus, never sounded on my ear so sweetly, never breathed so cheering a power, as after a larger observation of mankind ; and I turn to it, from the boasts of reformers, as to the authentic annunciation of a brighter day for humanity. . . .

“ I return, my friends, as I hope, with an increased sense of the weight and worth of my office. I am not merely using what may be called the language of my profession, but I speak from deepest conviction, in pronouncing the duties of the Christian ministry to be the most important which can be imposed on human beings. And in saying this, I am far from setting up any exclusive pretensions, for in these duties *all men* share. *All* are called, in their various relations, and according to their power, to advance the cause of pure religion and of divine morality, to which the ministry is dedicated ; and the function of the minister differs only in this, that he is appointed to give a more immediate, concentrated care to this primary interest of mankind. The ministry has grown more grand and solemn in my estimation, because I have a growing persuasion of the excellence of the religion to whose service it is devoted, and a growing conviction that on the ministry chiefly depends this cause of God. Whilst other means of advancing it are essential and efficient, still, the views of Christianity which prevail in a community, the form in which it is embraced, the influences it exerts on private character and happiness, on domestic life, on public opinion, on social institutions, depend upon nothing so much as the spirit, example, doctrine, zeal, fidelity of ministers. Man is used by God as his mightiest agent in operating on man. I feel that it is no ordinary work to which I am called, and that it were better never to have returned to it than to bring a cold and divided mind.”

The very earnest feeling of responsibility and privilege, with which he renewed his ministerial labors, yet more plainly appears in the two following extracts from his letters of that period : —

“ *Boston, Sept. 22, 1823.* I rejoice to tell you, and I do it with lively gratitude to God, that I bore the exertions of yesterday very, very well. I took the whole morning services, was as long as usual, gave some freedom to my feelings, and spoke, though not loudly,

yet with excitement. I was wearied, but not exhausted, and by silence and abstinence kept off feverishness. This morning I am as well as usual. I cannot easily make even you feel what a relief this success has given me. I will not say that the happiness of my life depends on my ability to perform pastoral duty, for I hope I should feel and enjoy God's goodness in any situation; but the Christian ministry, with all its trials, and they are not small, is the work on which my heart is set, and my spirit almost faints at the thought of resigning it."

"*October 27, 1823.* I know that it will make you happy to hear that I have borne my return to my duties far better than I anticipated. I have, perhaps, been imprudent, and preached even longer and more earnestly than formerly; but, although I have suffered a little, I have received no serious injury. For this my heart overflows with gratitude. I sometimes think myself happier than I ever have been before. To meet my family once more was an inexpressible good,—so great, that I hardly dared to anticipate it when abroad. But the privilege of preaching again that gospel which my sufferings have made more dear to me, and the hope that I may be allowed to continue to preach it, and may labor with more singleness of mind, fervency, devotion, and success,—this completes my joy.

"I have returned to my duties with an interest which, perhaps, nothing but long inability to perform them, and many trials, could have awakened. And thus, my dear, we are often able to see that it is good for us to have been afflicted. The inward process, which goes on amidst sufferings, often explains God's discipline, and we learn to bless the hand which chastens, for we see that it is stretched out in parental wisdom and mercy. I do not mean that I have derived great improvement from affliction, for I am aware that the satisfaction I find in returning to long-suspended duties is to be accounted for by natural as well as religious principles. But, be the cause what it may, the effect is a good, and will, I trust, give greater power to my ministry. I have talked of myself; for your love, I know, gives you an interest in the subject."

In order to show more fully his views of the profession which he so unfeignedly thought to be the highest office in modern society, far transcending, in the depth and extent of its influence, the sphere of the statesman or of the literary man, we will proceed to give some further extracts from his sermons; and, in doing so, shall avail ourselves of addresses which he made to his people annually, on the occasion of his return from Rhode Island, at which beautiful



retreat he began regularly to pass the summer months during this period of his life. In these discourses, he endeavored to break through the precise and ceremonious style of preaching which is usually thought necessary to preserve the decorum of the pulpit, and to speak in the more direct and simple language which friend uses to friend. These sermons are thus, to a great degree, autobiographical.

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTER.

1828. "In describing the ministry as a highly responsible office, I beg not to be misunderstood. I sometimes hear language employed on this point which offends me by its extravagance, and which can do only harm to the teacher and the taught. The minister is sometimes spoken of as if on him depended the salvation of his people, — as if to him it belonged to decide the eternal condition of his congregation, — as if by his neglect his hearers would be plunged into irremediable woe. I certainly do not feel as if any such tremendous power were in my hands. I would not wield it for the universe. I assume no such trust. I, indeed, offer myself to you as your spiritual friend and teacher; but I do it in the full knowledge that God has given you better aids than your minister, that I am but one out of many means of your instruction, and that, after all, the chief responsibility falls upon *yourselves*. Regard the ministry as important to you, — I will add, as essential to the Christian cause, — but do not lay upon it a burden which no conscientious or benevolent man for worlds would sustain.

"The minister is not alone intrusted with the salvation of the human race. True, the gospel is committed to him; but not to him only, nor to him chiefly. It is intrusted to *all* who receive it, for the benefit of their fellow-creatures. It is committed especially to the parent for the child, — to the private Christian for his family and friends, — to the Sunday-school teacher for the young, — to the more enlightened for the less privileged classes of society. The minister alone is not to preach the religion. It is to be preached in the nursery, in the household, in the place of business, in friendly intercourse, in public assemblies, as truly as in the pulpit; and we cannot doubt that often Christian truth is more effectually carried to the conscience and the understanding by the casual teaching of every day than by more regular and stated ministrations."

#### EACH SOUL MUST SAVE ITSELF.

1827. "The great work is to be done by the soul itself. I cannot, by preaching, even were I to speak with the tongues of angels,

make one of you a Christian ; nor, were I able, ought I to attempt such a work. You are to be made Christians by your own faithful use of all the means of religious improvement. Could I, my friends, by a word change your minds, expel all error from your understandings, subdue your passions, take from the irritable man every impulse of anger, from the worldly man every thought of accumulation, from the proud man every stirring of self-elation, I should undoubtedly deliver you from sources of trouble ; but your deliverance, thus passively acquired, would have no more virtue than would belong to you, were death, by extinguishing all consciousness, by striking you from existence, to work the same deliverance. Nothing is morally good in man but what he is active in producing, but what is the growth of his own free agency. Were I, by an irresistible influence, to implant in you a right faith and kind affections, I should not aid, but injure you, by taking from you the opportunities of virtue. You would come from my hand well-proportioned machines ; but machines you still would be. The glory of a free agent would be gone. I come not to exert such a sway, not to rule your minds or your hearts, but to urge you to establish within yourselves the sovereignty of reason and conscience, by your own reverential culture of these high principles of your nature."

## TRUE ELOQUENCE.

1827. "To rule over passive minds, to dictate to those who will not inquire and judge, seems to me a low ambition, a poor dominion. But the power of convincing, persuading, improving free and active and self-relying minds is a noble endowment. This is the only power over men which I covet. So desirous am I to dissuade you from putting yourselves passively into other men's hands, that I would advise you to distrust much of what is called eloquence in the pulpit. There is a true eloquence, which you cannot too much honor, and it is characterized chiefly by this mark: *it calls into vigorous exercise both the understanding and the heart of the hearer.* It has no design upon men's minds, does not desire to bear them away as by a torrent, does not hurry them to rash conclusions, does not appeal to prejudices, but treats the understanding fairly, generously, invites it to weigh proofs, and aims to inspire it with a supreme love of *truth*. This is the highest characteristic of genuine eloquence, that it gives tone and energy to the hearer's mind, gives him a consciousness of his own powers, and enables him to act from his own will and from his own judgment. Against such eloquence, of course, I would not warn you. But there is another kind, and one far more commonly met with, — because requiring little talent

and no elevation of soul, — which deals chiefly with men's fears, which palsies and enslaves the intellect, which makes the hearer distrustful of his own faculties, which overwhelms him with appalling images, and brings him into dependence upon the speaker. This, I have said, requires little talent; though, in the present state of society, it exerts great sway. A man of common sagacity may blindfold and lead behind him his fellow-creatures. A much higher and nobler skill is required to heal and strengthen men's intellectual sight, and to open before them large and glorious prospects."

#### THE END OF THE MINISTRY.

1830. "I have been called to aid you in that inward work on which the happiness of your present and future being depends, — the work of subduing evil, sin, the power of temptation, and of strengthening and building up in yourselves Christian faith and virtue. It has been my duty to urge on you the need of *continual improvement in character*, as the only thing worth living for, — without which life would be worse than lost. I have aimed, you will bear me witness, to excite you to the most earnest culture of your own minds, as that without which nothing uttered here, and nothing befalling you in God's providence, would do you good. I have aimed to raise your thoughts to that perfection, that dignity, that likeness to God, that height of virtue and happiness, to which Jesus Christ came to exalt us, and to which we may all rise by fidelity to his religion. And I have exhibited to you the depth of guilt, shame, and misery, into which, by self-neglect, by abandoning ourselves to low and evil passions, we may all be plunged. It has been my aim to win you to an unreserved devotedness to God, — to set before you such views of the Infinite Being, in his character, designs, and modes of action, as were suited to attract to him the whole strength of your love and trust and obedience. In a word, it has been my office to dispense to you the religion of Jesus Christ. I have especially sought to teach you the great, I may say the single, purpose of this religion, which is to form you after the spirit and likeness of its Divine Author, and thus to give you the first fruits of heaven while you live on earth, as well as to prepare you for that perfect and immortal state.

"Such has been my work. Its greatness fills my mind the more I contemplate it. Time, which shows us the emptiness of most earthly pursuits, only magnifies, in my regard, this glorious office. On what sublime and heart-thrilling themes have I been called, been permitted, to speak! It seems to me, that, through the universe, no words of more solemn import than GOD, IMMORTALITY,



PERFECTION, can be uttered, — that no higher themes can absorb the most exalted intelligences through eternity.”

#### HIS OWN AIMS.

1830. “That I have performed this work imperfectly, I feel. No one can be more penetrated with a sense of my deficiencies than myself; and my consciousness of these increases, because the religion which I am called to preach continually rises before me in greater beauty and dignity, with surer promises of happiness, more widely reaching claims, more animating motives, and more solemn sanctions. Still, my heart bears me witness that I have sincerely labored to carry home to the souls of my fellow-beings the divine truth which I have been privileged to impart. This truth has been my meditation and study by night and by day. I have given to it the strength of my body and mind. It has absorbed me, almost consumed me. Every new or brighter view of it has seemed to me a recompense and happiness which I would not have exchanged for any outward good. The hope of doing something to rescue this divine religion from the corruptions which so mournfully disfigure and darken it, — the hope of bringing out more clearly some of its divine features, and thus of contributing to extend and establish its empire on the earth, — has been the dearest, the most cherished hope of my life. So far, I trust, I have been loyal to the cause of my Master. Whether I have not confined myself too exclusively to this intellectual labor, whether I have not spent my strength too much in solitary reflection, whether a more active life and more frequent intercourse with my hearers might not have been more useful, — these are questions which I cannot determine. I may have erred; some, perhaps, may think I have. I may have been self-indulgent in the path I have taken, and you might have been more aided by services which I have withheld. I am not anxious to justify myself. I pray God that my error — if it has been one — may be forgiven, and that his providence may avert from you the evils of my want of wisdom or fidelity.”

An appreciating reader of the foregoing extracts will be conscious of a gradual change of tone in Dr. Channing's mode of address, — a change more readily felt than characterized, but which, by way of suggestion, we will denote by saying that it was constantly becoming less ministerial and more manly. He more and more regarded the religious teacher as the ideal of what all men should be, an inspirer of life. Universal sanctification of the whole character and conduct was the end which he aimed to present vividly to his hearers, as the only true object for a human being's aspira-

tion. And force of good-will — not sentimentality, not imaginative enthusiasm, not merely kindly affectionateness, but a brave, hopeful, conscientious, confiding love — was the spirit which flowed out from him in every word and look. This expansive feeling, in relation to the animating influence which a religious teacher should exert, appears very fully in his letters.

“*Newport, Aug. 28, 1828.* I consider my profession as almost infinitely raised above all others, when its true nature is understood and its true spirit imbibed. But as it is too often viewed and followed, it seems to me of little worth to him who exercises it, or to those on whom it ought to act. It requires moral elevation of sentiment, that the purposes of Christianity may be understood, and moral energy, a spirit of self-sacrifice, that those purposes may be pursued with resolution and power. I do not mean that a young man is to possess these requisites in a great degree, at first, — but he must have the seeds, and give some promise of them. To one who has this generous style of character, this capacity of devotedness and disinterestedness, I consider my calling as leaving all others very, very far behind. But when taken up for its respectability, for reputation, for a support, and followed mechanically, drudgingly, with little or no heartiness and devotion, or when seized upon fanatically and with a blind and bigoted zeal, I think as poorly of it as men of the world do, who, I grieve to say, have had too much reason for setting us ministers down among the drones of the hive of society.”

“*Portsmouth, July 7, 1828.*<sup>1</sup> In our profession, as in every other, success depends chiefly on the heartiness with which a man enters into it. He must throw his soul into his work. I am the more encouraged about your success, from the proof you have given of zeal in a good cause. You think nobly of the object to which you are about to devote yourself, and this is no small part of a minister's preparation. You may meet, at the outset, some disheartening circumstances. I suspect most ministers can tell you of their hours of despondency, especially at the beginning of their course. But true courage fights the enemy *within*, as well as abroad; and I shall be disappointed indeed if you are wanting in this generous virtue.

“Your friend and brother.”

“*Portsmouth, Rhode Island, June 18, 1828.*<sup>2</sup> The people here want to be awakened, certainly; but they have passed through the

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.

<sup>2</sup> To Orville Dewey, D.D.

ordinary process of revivals without much apparent benefit. I feel, more and more, that the people at large need to be protected against these modes of assault, by having some more distinct and thorough notions presented to them of what religion or virtue is, than perhaps any of us have yet given. The identity of religion and universal goodness is what they have hardly dreamed of. You have expressed some of the best views on the subject which I have heard; and, if your intellect *will* work, in spite of your plans of repose, perhaps it could not find a more useful topic.

“My mind turns much on the general question, What can be done for the scattering of the present darkness? I think I see, more and more, that the ministry, as at present exercised, though, on the whole, a good, is sadly defective. What would be the result of a superior man, not of the clergy, giving a course of lectures on the *teaching* of *Jesus*, just as he would give one on the philosophy of Socrates or Plato? Cannot this subject be taken out of the hands of ministers? Cannot the higher minds be made to feel that Christianity belongs to them as truly as to the priest, and that they disgrace and degrade themselves by getting their ideas of it from ‘our order’ so exclusively? Cannot learned men come to Christianity, just as to any other system, for the purpose of ascertaining what it is?”

“*Dec. 9, 1829.*<sup>1</sup> Is the time never coming when Christians will be less dependent on *ministers* than they now are? I feel deeply the defects of the present organization of the Christian church. ‘Every joint of the body should work effectually’ for the common growth; and now a few men have a monopoly of the work.”

“*Feb. 22, 1840.* The ministry need not continue what it has been, and the time is coming when it will be found to be the most effectual mode of getting near to our fellow-creatures. It demands great energy of thought and purpose; and, when so followed, promises unspeakable good.”

“*Newport, Rhode Island, Sept. 5, 1837.*<sup>2</sup> One of the discouraging symptoms of the day is, that so few persons, except of the clerical profession, make morals and religion the subject of investigation and serious inquiry. To most, religion is a tradition or a feeling. The noblest subjects of human thought, and those in which all men have an equal interest, are given up to a small body of professional men. The effects of this making theology a monopoly of a few are disastrous alike to the many and the few. Theology has become

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To Wm. Plumer, Jun., Esq., Epping, New Hampshire.



technical, a trade, a means of power. It has taken a monastic character, been severed from common life, and thus been turned into an instrument of superstition. The multitude, in their ignorance, have easily fallen under the dominion of fear, and have bowed their understandings to irrational and degrading doctrines. It always cheers me when I find a man, not of my profession, who understands the dignity of moral and religious truth, and seeks it as inestimably precious. These remarks will explain the pleasure your letter gave me. So far from feeling that you used an undue freedom in your suggestions, I was truly grateful for them. We ministers need the freest communication with our intelligent brethren of the *laity*. I use this word for want of a better, though I dislike it. They often understand the moral wants of the community better than we can. They know, as we cannot, when we beat the air or waste our strength on unimportant matters, and where the main obstacles to human improvement lie. What volume could be laid open to a minister so useful as the secret conviction of his thinking hearers, in regard to the character and effects of his labors? For want of such communication, we work much in the dark."

The dislike of spiritual dictatorship, sanctimonious dignity, and pompous arrogance, which appears more or less through these papers, was exceedingly strong in Dr. Channing. The designation of "Reverend," even, was most disagreeable to him. He had no taste for being set up as a saint or an oracle, and wished no influence but that which arose from perfect naturalness. He thought it was time for much of the superstitious homage to the clergy to vanish. His only reason, indeed, for wishing the ministry to be preserved as a distinct function in society was his belief that, amidst the anxieties incident to existing social relations, only the very strong could keep their spirits free, only the very tall in moral stature so raise their heads above the dust of the caravan as to see the horizon and the heavens and the direction of the march.

But the very motive which prompted Dr. Channing's desire to see the artificial eminence broken down on which fear and policy have isolated the clergy, and the props of conventional decencies swept away by which even the stupid and selfish feel themselves upheld in a position of power, and to have every minister left to stand firm or to fall, according to his manhood, was an ever-deepening reverence for the function of the prophet, — the real communicator of spiritual light. Amidst crowds of business-men, energetically turning the vast resources of modern science to the increase and accumulation of wealth, — amidst struggling political

parties, made restless by the spirit of liberty and the half-recognized rights of all men, rights possessed so partially even by the privileged, — amidst the growing multitude of teachers, literary, scientific, philosophical, plying the countless means of diffusing intelligence, — he longed to see a body of men step forward, fitted by the universality at once and the unity of their aim, their elevation above selfish meanness, their unfaltering hope for humanity, their joyful devotedness to God, to be the *conscience* of communities and nations. He felt that the age was really inspired with a divine power of love, and he looked for a ministry pure and fervent enough to be the medium through which this new life might find a voice of command, and make itself felt with a miraculous, renovating touch. He consecrated himself to the work of being, according to the needs and opportunities of his age and land, a mediator of this heavenly influence, and thus truly a minister of religion, — of reunion between man and man, and man and God. And largely as we have already quoted from his sermons and letters, in illustration of his views, justice to him demands that we should now give further extracts from his private papers. In these he expresses himself with yet more freedom and energy of feeling. We shall copy many passages, even at the risk of repetition, because they will open to us the very heart of the writer. Without attempting any methodical arrangement of these fragments, we may, for the sake of convenience, group them under distinct heads.

#### THE MORAL GREATNESS NEEDED IN THE MINISTER.

“The minister needs an heroic mould of mind, a sustained and habitual grandeur of conception, the energy of which may breathe itself into all around. He is not to have the brightness of his conviction crossed by a single shadow of the fear of man. A lofty, ever-present consciousness of being consecrated to the highest possible work on earth — the awakening and strengthening of what is divinest in human nature — is to possess him. He is to move among his fellows in the majesty and serenity which befit devotedness to heavenly ends. The sublime thought of the *divine love*, which it is Christ's end to awaken, must lift his mind above all transient interests and fortify him against allurements. He who sees this as a *reality* beholds a light that dims all outward glory. This firm and lofty tone of mind is what we need. We should adopt perfection as our own good, with a deep comprehension of its commanding beauty. We should speak of it with the language which it would itself adopt, could it reveal in words its divinity. We should announce this likeness to God as the end to be sought,

not as if teaching a proposition into which we had reasoned ourselves, but as if declaring a profound, radiant, all-penetrating intuition, — as if speaking from experience.”

“Positiveness, assumption, is an entirely different state of feeling from the elevation of soul wrought in us by the presence of great thoughts. The devotion of the whole heart to the pursuit of celestial goodness, the consciousness of such an aim, produces no dogmatism, no conceit of infallibility. A minister should have the authority of high virtue. His tone should be that of irreconcilable war against the peculiar evils of his times, and of resolute resistance to the influences of ease, opinion, epicurism, which bribe him to surrender principle. But this moral energy is not to be wasted on what is exterior and superficial; it is to be concentrated in opposition to the very heart and life of what is evil in the society around him and in the age. He is to feel that he is called to withstand the turbulence of the passions, deep-rooted prejudices, the insidious influence of public institutions and of social customs, and that his only reliance, under God, is on that mightiest power in the human soul, the moral power.”

“We want *singleness of purpose*, to have the whole soul possessed by a calm, deep-swelling admiration for the divine beauty of goodness, to be resolved to promote this by every energy of our nature. We should be filled with a divine fervor of soul, an expanding warmth of love. This living love has been the power of all true friends and teachers of mankind. It dissolves all restraints, ceremonies, barriers, opens to us the hearts of our fellow-men, and gives to the tone and countenance a winning charm. How should we feel ourselves to be acting in concert with God, in the fulfilment of the grand design to which Jesus and all good beings are devoted, and which comprehends the infinite happiness and glory of all spirits! How should the ineffable sublimity of this end enlarge, invigorate, purify us! The thought of man’s possible communion with God, and of his capacity of unbounded participation in the Divine goodness, should give a loftiness and energy of purpose to the preacher which should never for an instant forsake him, but make him unaffectedly superior to all outward dignities, undaunted amidst the opposition of the great, and tenderly sympathizing and respectful to the most debased.”

“What we need is a *spiritual force* that will not take the form and hue of the conditions or persons among which we live, but will resist debasing influences, and mould all around us after the pattern of great ideas. We need such an unfaltering faith in Christian virtue, its supremacy, its sure triumph, as will enable us



to assert its claims in speech and action, even in the most discouraging circumstances. With all mildness, there must be in us an uncompromising spirit. Having found the true good, we cannot yield to public opinion, to private friendship, or to any kind or measure of opposition. We must pay no heed to capricious estimates. Censure should not cost us a moment of anxiety, but only turn our regards more deeply inward to the Divine Oracle, the Voice of God, the Spirit of Christ. The fetters of worldly compromise must be shaken off, or we cannot take one free step."

"A bold, free tone in conversation, the decided expression of pure and lofty sentiment, may be influential to change the whole temper and cast of thinking of society around us. Are we not traitors to great truths, when we suppress the utterance of them, and let the opposite errors pass unrebuked? Ought not the spirit of the world to be continually met with mildness, yet unfaltering firmness? It cannot be opposed too steadily and uncompromisingly. To bring out a noble spirit into daily intercourse is a more precious offering to truth than retired speculation and writing. He who leaves a holy life behind him, to bless and guide his fellows, bequeaths to the world a richer legacy than any book. The true, simple view of right should be presented without disguise. High principles are to be advanced as *real* laws; the vague uncertainty wrapped round them by unmeaning professions and practical renunciation is to be stripped away, and they are to be firmly set up as standards for the judgment of all men, public and private. No air of superiority, contempt, anger, no fault-finding, cynicism, no thought of self, should mingle with this testimony to right; but a true love of mankind, a reverence of virtue, a desire to elevate all men to the nobleness for which they are destined, should manifest the depth and purity of our moral convictions."

"An all-pervading devotion to goodness should stamp the whole character, conduct, conversation. But wisdom should guide this frankness. The mind should not be borne away by a fervor which it cannot restrain. There should be manifest self-direction and dignified self-command. Let there be no whining sentimentality about virtue, but a manly consciousness of the greatness of character to which every child of God should attain, — a calm elevation of thought and aim, — a cordial sympathy with all that is generous in society and individuals, — a deep sense of the reality and practicableness of heavenly excellence, — a rational, yet glowing, consciousness of the true glory of a spiritual being. The presence of our fellow-men should not rob us of self-respect, should not restrain us, — restrain the will from energy, the intellect from bold and

freest thought, the conscience from prescribing highest duties. We must be palsied by no fear to offend, no desire to please, no dependence upon the judgment of others. The consciousness of self-subsistence, of disinterested conformity to high principle, must communicate an open unreserve to our manners. We should never distrust the power of a great truth fairly uttered. To act on others, there must be decision of intellect as well as of affection, — a resolute energy of the whole man."

"What a privilege it is to awaken in the souls of men a consciousness of their moral relationship to God! This truly is a creative work. In proportion as the spiritual gains predominance over the material in our nature, does not the soul take possession of the body, shine through its features, attitude, looks, and reveal itself to those whom words cannot reach? What faith in God and virtue may a tone express! Do we comprehend the power of love, when it truly reigns in us, how it encircles us with an atmosphere, pervades those around us, melts down resistance, soothes excitement? A *mighty* love, diffusing itself through eye, voice, form, what can it not accomplish? Should we not raise ourselves to this state of calm intenseness of love? No man knows the measure of his influence till this force abides in him. How many all around us are really dead! But who can lie inert and torpid before the presence of an absorbing, overflowing affection? Christ's life was a revelation of the spiritual love which filled him. Such a love, and such a life, should be sought by us."

"The minister is to speak as did Christ, listening to the Divine Oracle, and ready to suffer, and to die, if need be, for the truth. A superiority to all outward considerations is the first qualification for the rightful pursuit of his profession. If he desires to stand fair with men, he will be a traitor to his Lord. If he asks himself what will please his hearers, rather than what will benefit them, he desecrates his calling. Is he whose very work is to reform society to take society as his rule? The Christian minister is not sent to preach cold abstractions, to talk of virtue and vice in general terms, to weave moral essays for his hearers to admire and to sleep on; but he is sent to quicken men's consciences, and to show them to themselves as they are. On all subjects, where his convictions are in conflict with prevailing usages, he is bound to speak frankly, though calmly. Not that he is to deal in vague and passionate denunciation, to be a common scold, a meddlesome fault-finder. But if he thinks the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits a sin against society, he is to say so; if he believes that the sending of rum and opium to savage nations, to spread among them the worst

evils of civilization, is a wanton crime, he is to declare his opinion ; if he considers the maxims of the business-world hostile to integrity and benevolence, he is to expose their falseness."

"At the present day, there is little need of cautioning ministers against rashness in reproving evil. The danger is all on the other side. As a class, they are most slow to give offence. Their temptation is to sacrifice much to win the affections of their people. Too many satisfy themselves with holding together a congregation by amenity of manners, and by such compromises with prevalent evils as do not involve open criminality. They live by the means of those whose vices they should reprove, and thus are continually ensnared by a selfish prudence. Is it said, that they have families dependent upon them, who may suffer for their fidelity? I answer, Let no minister marry, then, unless the wife he chooses have such a spirit of martyrdom as would make her prefer to be stinted in daily bread rather than see her husband sacrifice one jot or tittle of his moral independence. Is it said, that congregations would be broken up by perfect freedom in the ministers? Better far would it be to preach to empty pews, or in the meanest halls, and there to be a fearless, disinterested witness to the truth, than to hold forth to crowds in gorgeous cathedrals, honored and courted, but not daring to speak one's honest convictions, and awed by the world."

"How shall the minister quicken and preserve a heavenly tone of spirit? Let him cherish an habitual consciousness of God's infinitely tender, paternal love for every human being, and of the infinite capacity of goodness in all spirits. Let him accustom himself to regard each individual with whom he holds intercourse as made and designed for wisdom, love, power, happiness, without limits. Let him learn to regard all men as now related to God and good spirits, and as welcomed to an endless participation in the ever-unfolding, infinitely benevolent designs of God. Let him joyfully and unreservedly consecrate himself to this work of elevating souls, concentrate his whole being upon it, forget comparatively everything but this divine end of human development, esteem all power and opportunity as of worth in proportion as they are applicable to this great purpose, and resolve to live and die in advancing *God's plan of spiritual perfection*. Let him not permit himself to be distracted by little interests, inconveniences, engagements, but secure such outward accommodations as favor health, and think no more of circumstances ; thus will he avoid frittering away his strength in petty details, and keep his soul whole for great objects. Let him abstain from living in his own past deeds, and waste no



energy of thought or will in self-complacent recollections or idle regrets, but use success, praise, reputation, position, as a ground of nobler efforts and larger hopes, as an incentive and encouragement to wider usefulness. Let him be wise in labor, so as not to exhaust the elastic force of mind and thought, and be habitually calm, so as to maintain that clearness of purpose on which enduring strength of will depends. Let him put all his powers in tune, and make his whole life harmonious by inward unity. Above all, let him constantly look up to God as the all-communicating Father, from whom pour down into the faithful soul unfailing streams of spiritual life."

#### CENTRAL TRUTHS TO BE TAUGHT. — THE TRUE REVIVAL.

"Are there not seasons of spring in the moral world, and is not the present age one of them? Is not a new power now making itself felt? Are we not all asleep? Is there any just sensibility to our connection with God and the eternal world? Is it an improvement of the existing forms of religion which is wanted, or a new form of religion at once more intimate and more universal? Is a nobler manifestation of religion to be given, independent of and superior to preceding modes of manifesting it, and comprehending and reconciling all? Can a nobler life be revealed to men, which they will feel to be nobler, as placed in contrast with present evils? Can a new condition of society be presented in a spirit raised above actual degradations, so that the brightness of the *Divine Life* may be seen to dim all other interests, and draw to itself the entire energy of human thought and feeling?"

"Is God seen to be a PARENT? Is not the intercourse with him too formal? Do we not need an exhibition of his near relations to us, which will awaken a more filial, rejoicing, confiding piety? Do we *believe* that he loves us, loves us *infinitely*, that a stream of goodness is forever flowing down upon us, that he delights in forgiving, that he joyfully welcomes his returning children? Is this the great view to be presented, that God is desirous to impart *himself* to us, to unite us to him in perfect love? Any view of God, of which love is not the centre, is injurious to the soul which receives it. Is not religion to be unfolded as a profound, serene love of a Moral Parent, who calls us to immortal glory, who by duty is guiding us to a nearer perception of his own glory, to resemblance to himself, to communion with him forever? Is not this faith in the *perfect love* of God the grand, commanding, central view which is to fill the thoughts, to take strong hold on the will, to excite a calm, full, concentrated enthusiasm?"

“Are we not to aim chiefly at calling forth in men a consciousness of their capacity for embracing God and the universe in a pure love, — a love unfolding without limit in strength and vastness? Is not this perfection of soul to be brought before men as a great reality? Are they not to be taught to see the germs of it in the common affections which move them, in the moral principle, and, above all, in their capacity of communion with the Infinite Fountain of all goodness, joy, beauty, life? Is it not the main design of Christianity to give a revelation of this love as the END of man, and as God’s ever-fresh inspiration? Is not the world within thus to be laid open, and the spiritual glory of which all outward splendor is the faint emblem made clear, until men are taught to feel a divine joy in their own nature? Should not the great aim be to awaken the consciousness of the greatness of the soul, and a reverence for the moral element in man as an emanation from the Infinite Being, as God’s image, voice, life within us? He who would promote this great reformation, for which the religious world is now ready, should live with a vivid, absorbing comprehension of the Divine Life. It should each day revive him, be a perpetual light to him, determine his views of society, and give a tone to every word and action.”

“A new voice is needed, a voice of the deepest, calmest, most quickening conviction, in which the whole soul speaks, in which every affection and faculty is concentrated. The divinity of goodness must burn within us, — must awaken all our sensibility, call the whole being into action, come forth irresistibly as from an exhaustless, overflowing fountain, — must give to the voice a penetrating power, and infuse through the whole manner an inspiring animation. What is this *new* spirit which is striving to utter itself, to give a new manifestation of the soul in individuals, a new form to society, and to awaken enthusiasm in overcoming evil? The knowledge of the Perfect God as Infinite Goodness, Infinite Energy of Good-Will, All-communicating, All-inspiring Love, — is not this the great truth? Must not religion be presented habitually as such an exercise of the moral power in pure, enlarging charity as will bring us within the near and constant influence of Infinite Goodness, till the whole being is penetrated with this spirit of disinterestedness, and filled with trust, gratitude, sympathy, hope, joyful co-operation? Philanthropy, a noble, victorious benevolence, like that of Christ, is to be the great end, — not a precise, defined virtue, but an expansive, ever-enlarging action of goodness. And this love must not be vague, abstract, spiritual merely, but wise, practical, specific, efficient, just, tender, vigorous, in all relations, —

of home, of friendship, of society at large, of patriotism, of humanity."

"A profound conviction of God's moral purposes to men, of his design to exalt the soul infinitely, must kindle a purpose in us vast and enduring as his own, give us faith in the possibility of redeeming mankind, give us a respect for every individual, make us feel our unity with all. God must be regarded as enjoining this unlimited love, as calling us to universal brotherhood, and forbidding all that separates us from our kind. He is to be looked up to as the ever-quickenings source of life to all men, as the all-embracing, all-communicating spiritual Father of every human being. Love is to be cherished as the fountain of spiritual life within us; we are to feel an adoring, grateful sympathy with the Divine Love, which will prompt us to breathe it in, and to be renewed by its power in the image of God. Man is to be loved as God's child, as God's temple, as the being in whom God reveals himself, and presents himself to us for our love. A confidence in the Divine benignity is to show itself in our unflinching efforts to lift up the race, to awaken all that is generous and noble in the soul, to remove obstructions to human elevation, to breathe into all men a consciousness of their greatness and a reverence for their fellows. We are to be animated with this new life of love, — of *love for man as man*, — a love which embraces all, of every rank and character, — which forgets divisions and outward distinctions, — breaks down the old partition walls, — sees a divine spark in every intelligence, — longs to redress the existing inequalities of society, to elevate all conditions of men to true dignity, to use wealth only as a means of extensive union, not of separation, — which substitutes generous motives for force, — which sees nothing degrading in labor, but honors all useful occupation, — which everywhere is conscious of the just claims and rights of all, resisting the idolatry of the few, ceasing to worship the great, calling upon the mighty to save, not crush, the weak, from reverence for our common nature, — and which, in a word, recognizes the infinite worth of every human spirit. This is the true spirit for the minister, a love like that of Jesus on the cross, which sacrifices all to the well-being of man, and the glory and infinite designs of God."

"To raise up the fallen world, the minister needs some sublime objects which can fire the imagination, stir the whole souls of men, and waken them from their selfishness, — some principles suited to human nature, — some truths fitted to work penetratingly, with mighty renewing power. How much is lost by adulterating the truth, by bringing it down to the condition of existing society!



Christ stood alone. True Christianity still stands in contrast with the spirit of the world. Its ministers should be more uncompromising, searching, pungent in their preaching. Men need something which will take a strong hold of them, rouse them up to earnest, resolute action on themselves. What are these great truths, principles, objects? What are the *central truths* to be taught? Is not the character of God as a Moral Parent, an Infinite Fulness and Fountain of Perfection, — who gives moral powers to his children for infinite development, who desires to communicate his own life, who has no other end in creation, who is always present with infinite, parental interest in the soul, — is not this the truth of truths which is to quicken us, and to reveal the ineffably glorious end within our reach? Cannot this spiritual perfection, in all its excellence, beauty, power, be made a visible reality to men, and be set forth to them as the supreme good, the condition of all other good, — as that in which all other good is contained, and in giving which God gives all things.”

“What a quickening thought is it, what a ground of infinite hope, that God has given us a nature like his own! — that the whole universe is formed as a field for its nutriment and growth! — that all our relations with nature, society, family, are designed to call out this holy love! Should not heaven be presented as essentially consisting in goodness, in a joyful communion with God, with good spirits, with the universe, by an all-pervading love? Cannot the practical errors, means, and processes of spiritual growth be explained? Moral perfection, of which all particular virtues are the germs, — is not this the grand thought which shows the true glory of the soul, which reveals to us the infinite love of God and the immensity of his designs of benevolence, which gives such profound and awful interest to our relations with him? God’s infinity, — does it not make all things possible to us? — does it not open before us an infinite future of progress? — does it not offer to us a Being of exhaustless love, with whom we may commune more intimately for ever? What will he not be to us, if we heartily adopt and obey his law? What will he not communicate from his fulness to those who use their moral power to avail themselves of his omnipotence?”

“The distinguishing glory of Christ’s character is to be brought out and unfolded with new power. Is he viewed enough as a whole? Is it seen that his virtue was a perfect, harmonious one? The blessedness of the spirit of Christ, as a *universal love* which can choose, at all sacrifices, the highest good, and give self wholly up in disinterested service, — this is to be shown in all its quickening

reality ; it is to be exhibited as God's own spirit, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the principle of heavenly life, the bond of vital union with the Divine Being, the germ of infinite and eternal virtue. God is the source, object, model, of this perfect love. His infinite excellence gives infinite glory to the soul which is fixed on him as its object. This goodness is his delight ; he nourishes it in us, renews it from himself, makes it one with him. The true good, to which the soul should turn, is moral likeness to God, being perfect as he is perfect. This union with him, this devotion to the cause of spreading his kingdom through the universe, is the spirit of Christ. This makes Christ's character the image of the Infinite Beauty. This is to be taught as the only true life. Christ taught an abandonment of all objects which men delight in, from a profound and earnest aspiration after perfect goodness. Shall the ministers of Christ make compromises with lower principles? Shall they bring Christianity down to the standard of the world?"

"Nothing will be done by the minister till he arouses in men a fervent energy of the moral principle. Decency, prudence, self-interest, regard to comfort, respectability, are nothing. Men must be made to thirst for perfect goodness, to see its eternal beauty, to long for it with the full force of their spiritual affections. Will not the heart respond to the claims of God and Christ and celestial virtue, when plainly urged? Is there not an inward tendency of our spiritual being to moral perfection, which insures a joyful acquiescence in the highest appeals? May not men be made to see the rudiments of these heavenly capacities in themselves, — to feel that they have experienced a peculiar joy in love, — that they have gained new life by sacrifices to uprightness? Unbounded progress in virtue, in love, light, power, — all-embracing philanthropy, — the absorption of selfishness in universal goodwill, — victory over debasing influences, — spiritual liberation from all low impulses, — the ever-near influences of the Holy Spirit, — the divine love manifested in Christ, — the almighty design of God to redeem men from all iniquity, — the prospect of immortality, of never-ending approach to God, of ever-growing participation in his life, and ever-widening co-operation with his beneficence, — these are the great truths which come home with irresistible power to the divine principle within us. Ought any views but these to be presented? He alone can speak of sin as an infinite evil, and concentrate against it the whole energy of the soul's aversion, dread, displeasure, who has risen into the Divine light, who has faith in the unlimited capacities of our spiritual nature, who perceives the reality of heavenly goodness, who knows that by love man has affinity to God."

## TRUE PREACHING.

“I can conceive of a style of preaching seldom heard as yet. It will spring from the conviction of a higher state of humanity as possible now, and must come from the souls of teachers who have reached to that new state themselves. Would not a preacher, really inspired with the grandeur of Christian virtue, come into so vivifying a union with the minds of his hearers as to raise them to an intensity of intellectual and moral action of which they were incapable before? In proportion as the minister attains to this elevation, he will speak with plainness and without evasion. There is a certain fastidious way of treating subjects, as if they would be tarnished by direct speech, which destroys the power of preachers. The minister has other work than to amuse men. Grace, harmony, energy, should be blended and merged in the unity of the sublime end to which they all conspire. No poetical, imaginative air should color his discourse; but divine goodness should be spoken of as the great practical reality. He must arouse the conscience to its solemn claims; he must waken the will to the earnest and resolute pursuit of it. He should speak with urgency, — not that urgency which belongs to personal and narrow interests, but that which befits a mind exalted by the living knowledge of an infinite good.”

“We ought to stand up before men so filled with the greatness and beneficence of our function, as to be wholly unconscious of self, and utterly superior to frowns or favor, — strong, serene, free, inspired. For true eloquence there is but one preparation; it is to make the thought of spiritual perfection, of God’s life within the soul, real to ourselves by habitual experience. We need calm, collected, fearless minds, elevated by the contemplation of spiritual truth, and brought near to men by a most earnest feeling of brotherhood. O the unspeakable littleness of a soul which, intrusted with Christianity, speaking in God’s name to immortal beings, with infinite excitements to the most enlarged and fervent love, sinks down into narrow self-regard, and is chiefly solicitous of its own honor! The pulpit should be to the minister an altar, upon which he may offer himself up as a living sacrifice, pure, spotless.”

“The minister is to speak with the same conviction of spiritual life that filled Jesus Christ. He is to be truly an inspired, Heaven-ordained prophet. What sanctity, what separation from selfish views, what entire dedication of his whole being to the recovery, freedom, growth, perfection of the immortal spirit should characterize him! His whole life should be a discipline of purification from earthly influences. He should be a perpetual testimony of godlike goodness to the world which he would raise. He should



so live, that the Spirit may shine out through him, and quicken all around him. What an office, — to awaken the divine in man! The glorious form of humanity set before us in Christ should be ever before the minister. The preacher can never preach as he ought, never write or speak with the power belonging to his office, unless he feels ever present the deep conviction of union with God and Christ and all good spirits. He is not alone. The mightiest energies in the universe are co-operating with him. He must blend himself with God's grand reconciling agencies. The Roman, the Spartan, could merge his own individual good in the national well-being. In a far higher tone of feeling, the minister should enter into, and be absorbed by, the Spiritual Community of which God is the Life."

The fervent enthusiasm with which Dr. Channing regarded the privileges and responsibilities of his profession, and his vivid sense of the grand tendencies of the age towards an embodiment in social life of the spirit of love, made him most anxiously desire to see a body of young men entering the ministry, who could rise above sectarian enthrallments and worldly hindrances, and give themselves up unreservedly to the work of advancing a revival of practical goodness. This state of mind appears in all his printed sermons of this period,<sup>1</sup> as well as in his private papers, from which we select the two following.

The first is a letter to Henry Ware, Jun., who had just been appointed Professor of Pastoral Care in the Cambridge Divinity School, and was about entering upon the office in which, for so many years, he opened his pure and earnest spirit as a fountain of living waters for his younger brethren. Humble as he was wise, Mr. Ware had sought counsel from Dr. Channing as to the best modes of performing his duties, and the following is the reply to his letter: —

"St. Croix, January 29, 1831.

"MY DEAR SIR, — . . . . I will begin with answering the end of your letter. You ask my views respecting your work. The discourse which you have thought fit to publish from my volume shows you the spirit which, as I think, should characterize the institution. I wish the young men to be more and more imbued with the 'spirit of truth,' the supreme love of truth, the least understood, least honored, least cherished of the virtues, and yet the cardinal virtue of a religious teacher. It is not hard to stir up young men to seek distinction by paradoxes and startling novelties; but to inspire

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. III., pp. 137, 207, 227, 257. One Volume Edition, pp. 269, 246, 291, 257.

that love of truth which makes the young fear their own errors as much as those of others, opens the mind to every new ray of light, and quickens it to improvement in all known virtue, as the best preparation for knowing higher, — this is no easy task. And yet, until a new thirst for truth, such, I fear, as is not now felt, takes possession of some gifted minds, we shall make little progress. I apprehend that there is but one way of putting an end to our present dissensions; and that is, not the triumph of any existing system over all others, but the acquisition of something better than the best we now have. The way to reconcile men who are quarrelling in a fog is to let in some new and brighter light. It seems to me that we are fighting now in a low, misty valley. A man who should gain some elevated position, overlooking our imagined heights of thought, and who would lead us after him, would set us all right in a short time.

“Another idea expressed in my discourse impresses me more; and that is, the importance of a spirit of martyrdom. No man is fitted to preach or promote Christianity who is not fitted to die for it. He in whom the pure and sublime virtue of Christianity has not wrought the conviction of its own unrivalled worth and glory, so that he can ‘count all things loss for it,’ cannot go forth with the power which is necessary for one who is to be its minister in this crooked and perverse generation.

“I think, in my discourse, that I did not attach sufficient importance to the spirit of humility. I am satisfied that, when Jesus said, ‘He that shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,’ he meant by *greatness* singular efficiency and eminence in promoting his religion. By humility, in this place, we are to understand the triumph of love over the passion for superiority, and a deep sympathy with the weakest and lowest of our brethren. All our institutions — domestic, political, and religious — are feeding the passion for distinction and superiority; and yet nothing, I believe, is so hostile to the *power* which a minister should covet above all things, — the power of approaching the souls of men, and of communicating to them what is best in his own soul. If I could, I would blot out from the minds of our young men the ideas of distinction and superiority. I would have them venerate the Divine image in their poorest fellow-creatures too much to think of making them subservient to their own glory. I would have them specially concerned for the poor, ignorant, and suffering; and, for this end, I wish they would work with Dr. Tuckerman in the ministry at large.”

The second is a brief essay on Public Prayer, which Dr. Chan-

ning wrote out, at Mr. Ware's request, for the use of the students in the Divinity School.

"Public prayer answers its end in proportion as it makes the hearer pray. To *excite the spirit of prayer in the congregation* is the test of true public devotion.

"Prayer is the expression of deep want to a Being of Infinite Fulness and Goodness.

"The spirit of prayer, therefore, consists in consciousness of deep want, and in faith in God's infinite power and willingness to supply.

"The minister, to excite this spirit in others, must possess it himself, that is, must cherish this consciousness and this faith.

"The want which prayer breathes is spiritual, or the want of spiritual life, of moral perfection, of godlike love, of redemption from moral evil, of spotless purity, of union with God, of universal charity, &c.

"No minister can pray aright in whom this want is not deeply felt. It should be intense, — the yearning of his soul. To excite it, his mind should turn often to its object, — that is, to moral perfection, as manifested in God, in Christ, in great and holy men, — to virtue, in its most lovely and inspiring forms, to the workings of the spiritual life in himself and others, and to all the motives by which moral excellence will become to him the supreme good, absorbing all others.

"Another means of exciting this consciousness is this. When the bright idea of moral, Christian excellence is awakening strong aspiration, he should look into himself and see his deep deficiency, and learn the greatness of his want, the vastness of the change required to realize his conception of excellence.

"But faith is as needful as consciousness of want; and to cherish this, nothing is so important as to view God in the peculiar light in which he is placed by Christianity. The minister must habitually look up to him as a Spiritual Father and Fountain, as having an infinite interest in the human soul, as desiring its recovery and perfection, as ever present to give his Spirit, and as having sent his Son to manifest him in this character, and to awaken this faith in his spiritual love. Until this view of God takes the place of all others, becomes habitual, becomes associated with his name and every thought of him, we shall not know the full worth and power of Christianity, and shall pray imperfectly. Christianity has no higher end than to awaken faith in God, as the Spiritual, Celestial Father, as the Friend of the soul, as desiring to impart to it a celestial life.



“ If these views of prayer be just, then the *form* of public prayer is easily settled.

“ It must be simple. Deep want is ambitious of no ornaments.

“ It must avoid diffusiveness. Earnest want gives directness and condensation to language. It must overflow with natural expressions of love, of Christian virtue, and of delight in God as its source. A spiritual tone must pervade it.

“ This naturalness, this expression of spiritual sensibilities as if they formed the soul's essence and life, is the chief power of public prayer.”

And now that we have learned, in these various ways, how high was Dr. Channing's estimate of his vocation, let us, for a few moments, regard him in the active discharge of his ministerial duties. No description, indeed, can convey an adequate impression of the peculiar charm of his presence and manner as a preacher; yet a few outlines may awaken grateful memories in those who enjoyed the privilege of listening to him, and, by the power of sympathy, may call up some not unworthy image in the minds of others who never breathed in his influence by personal communion. In the following familiar letter to a friend, a frequent hearer has rapidly sketched the effect of his preaching, and therein justly delineated one source of its power,—its pervading humanity. Without a trace of sentimentalism, Dr. Channing overflowed with genuine feeling, which was all the more affecting because he never purposely manifested, but rather restrained, his sensibility.

“ Notwithstanding Dr. Channing's varied talents, benignity is the most conspicuous feature of his character. He is fervently devout; and when the saint extends his arms to implore a blessing on his beloved people, we fancy his God smiles upon his request, and silently respond, ‘ Whom *thou* blessest is blessed.’ He prays;—we hear the patriot intercede for his country, and the philanthropist for mankind. His prayers are not preaching. He returns thanks for natural affection and family attachments, and we see the dutiful son, the affectionate brother and husband. Before he read the apostolic precept, ‘ Rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those that weep,’ nature had written upon his heart the law of sympathy, and he never could mock the ear of grief by pitiless recited consolation. Does he plead the cause of the poor? We shudder while ‘ the unkind blast of winter pierces the walls of the decayed cottage, and while the half-covered bed yields no refuge from the cold.’ His words reach the heart, when he warns us not to repeat, ‘ *Our* Father who art in heaven,’ unless we are really

brethren to the poor and afflicted. An attentive observer of life, he delineates the operations of the passions, and his hearers whisper, 'Who has betrayed our secrets? what penetrating eye has pierced our hearts? how knows he so to describe the tortures of envy, ambition, and shame?' He shows us the vicious youth, 'irritable and desponding,' a prey to the agonies of remorse, and ready forcibly to stop the rapid pulses of his heart, and we exclaim, 'Forbear! forbear! the picture is too faithful!' Yet admiration at his skill almost makes us pleased to be pained. The passions obey his voice. He excites at will hope, fear, and pity."

Another source of Dr. Channing's power was his sincerity. He was transparent in simple earnestness. The personal limitations of the speaker and writer disappeared, and he seemed to be only a pure medium through which truth was uttering itself. The style of composition, so clear, graceful, and strong, — the rich variety of manner, so fervent and beautiful, and so doubly affecting from the contrast it presented of physical infirmity with spiritual force, were forgotten, and the hearer found himself translated to the mount of vision, upon which the prophet was standing face to face with heaven and Deity. He was wholly unartificial, unconscious, and absorbed in his subject. He stood awed, yet animated, between God above and his listening brethren. "On no account," he once said to a young brother in the ministry, "on no account, — in your public services, try to exhibit by look or tone any emotion which you do not feel. If you feel coldly, appear so. The sermon may be lost, but your own truthfulness will be preserved." By this rule he invariably governed himself. The effect which he produced was deep and indelible, because his eloquence was so lost sight of and swallowed up in the glory of his theme.

And this leads us to a recognition of the chief source of his power, which we have already noticed as characterizing his youth, — his living sense of spiritual realities. The pulpit was to him the grandest position upon earth, and he entered it with a most exalting, yet disinterested, sense of its dignified and solemn trusts. In standing up before a congregation as a minister of God, he was conscious that he assumed responsibilities as much vaster than those of the judge upon the bench, of the legislator in the halls of council, of the executive officer upon his seat of power, as conscience is higher than intellect, common social affection, or natural desires. He voluntarily became a mediator between the Infinite Being and finite spirits. It has been well said: "There was no power of mind, however lofty, that his function did not to him appear to bring into urgent requisition. Preaching never seemed

to him for an instant the discharge of a mere professional duty, the fulfilment of a formal task. *It was the great action of his life.* It was the greatest action that could be demanded of any life. He felt that never Demosthenes nor Cicero, that never Burke nor Chatham, had a greater work to do than he had every Sunday. He poured into his office his whole mind and heart. The preparation for it was a work of consecrated genius; it was as if every week he had made a poem or an oration.”<sup>1</sup> It was more; for he considered the sermon, in our day, as the highest possible mode of expression, combining oration, poetry, and prophecy in one.

We cannot better sum up these general views of Dr. Channing as a preacher, than by continuing our extracts from the notice just quoted: — “No preacher, perhaps, had ever at command the stores of a richer imagination. But all was sober, in his administration of religion. To utter the truth, the naked truth, was his highest aim and ambition. The effect he was willing to leave with God and with the heart of the hearer. He never seemed to labor so much to enforce truth as to utter it; but this kind of utterance, this swelling and almost bursting of the inmost heart to express itself, was the most powerful enforcement. There was always, however, a chastening and restraining hand laid upon the strong nature within; and this manner has led some, I believe, to deny to Channing the gift of the highest eloquence. I know not what they call eloquence; but this restrained emotion always seems to me one of its most touching demonstrations; surely that which reaches the heart and unlocks the fountain of tears is its very essence; and that which penetrates to the still depths of the conscience, that lie beneath tears, is its very awfulness and grandeur. Such was the eloquence of Channing. I shall never forget the effect upon me of the first sermon I ever heard from him. Shall I confess, too, that, holding then a faith somewhat different from his, I listened to him with a certain degree of distrust and prejudice? These barriers, however, soon gave way; and such was the effect of the simple and heart-touching truths and tones which fell from his lips, that it would have been a relief to me to have bowed my head, and to have wept without restraint through the whole service. And yet I did not weep; for there was something in that impression too solemn and deep for tears. I claim perfection for nothing human; . . . but certainly no preaching that I have heard has come so near, in this respect, to the model in my mind, — I say, not irreverently, the Great Model, — as the preaching of Channing. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dewey's Discourse on the Character and Writings of Channing, pp. 7, 8.



In most men's religious feeling, there is something singularly general and vague; . . . they do not meditate their religion deeply in their hearts. . . . But it was not so with the remarkable and venerable person of whom I speak. His thoughts on this theme, the deep and living verities of his own experience, had an original impress, a marked individuality, a heart-felt truth, and a singular power to penetrate the heart. His words had a strange and heart-stirring vitality. Some living power within seemed to preside over the selection and tone of every word, and to give it more than the force and weight of a whole discourse from other men." <sup>1</sup>

And now let us go, on some Sunday morning, to the meeting-house in Federal Street, and hear for ourselves this wonderful preacher. The doors are crowded; and, as we enter, we see that there are but few vacant seats, and that the owners of the pews are hospitably welcoming strangers, whom the sexton is conducting up the aisles. There is no excitement in the audience, but deep, calm expectation. With a somewhat rapid and an elastic step, a person small in stature, thin and pale, and carefully enveloped, ascends the pulpit stair. It is he. For a moment, he deliberately and benignantly surveys the large congregation, as if drinking in the influence of so many human beings; and then, laying aside his outer garments, and putting on the black silk gown, he selects the hymn and passage from Scripture, and, taking his seat, awaits in quiet contemplation the time for commencing the service. What impresses us now, in his appearance, is its exceeding delicacy, refinement, and spiritualized beauty. In the hollow eye, the sunken cheeks, and the deep lines around the mouth, the chronic debility of many years has left an ineffaceable impress. But on the polished brow, with its rounded temples, shadowed by one falling lock, and on the beaming countenance, there hovers a serenity which seems to brighten the whole head with a halo.

The voluntary on the organ has been played, the opening invocation has been offered by the assistant in the pulpit, and the choir and congregation have joined in singing the first hymn; — and now he rises, and, spreading out his arms, says, "Let us unite in prayer." What a welcome to near communion with the Heavenly Father is there in the tremulous tenderness of that invitation! This is a solemn reality, and no formal rite, to him. The Infinite is here, around all, within all. What awful, yet confiding reverence, what relying affection, what profound gratitude, what unutterable longing,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dewey's Discourse on the Character and Writings of Channing, pp. 9-11.

what consciousness of intimate spiritual relationship, what vast anticipations of progressive destiny, inspire these few, simple, measured, most variously modulated words! How the very peace of heaven seems to enter and settle down upon the hushed assembly!

There follows a pause and perfect silence for a few moments, which the spirit feels its need of, that it may reassume its self-control and power of active thought. And now the Bible is opened; the chapter to be read is the fifteenth of the Gospel of John. The grand announcement is spoken, the majestic claim is made, — “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” How often we have heard these sentences! and yet did we ever before begin to know their exhaustless wealth of meaning? What depth, volume, expressiveness, in those intonations! “That *my joy* might remain in you, and that your joy might be *full*.” Yes, O most honored brother, now we have gained a glimpse of the rich life of thy god-like disinterestedness. We shall be indeed thy “*friends*,” “when we love one another as thou didst love us.” It is enough. No mere rhetorician, however trained and skilful, could have made these words so penetrating in pathetic sweetness, so invigorating in unbounded hope. The very smile and hand of the Saviour seem to have been upon us in blessing and power. Every emphasis and inflection of the reader was fraught with his own experience. The saying is no longer a mystical metaphor to us, — “If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him”; for the fact is illustrated before our eyes. The hymn is read. What melody! what cadence! The tone may be too prolonged, and too undulating the accent; but we can never, never again forget those lines. In many a distant scene of doubt and fear, of trial and temptation, their music will come vibrating through the inner chambers of our hearts, and, at the sound, our bosom-sins will disappear, “awed by the presence” of the “Great Invisible.”

The singing is over. The hearts of the hearers are attuned. The spirit of the preacher has already pervaded them, and softened them to harmony. It is the “new commandment” of which he is to discourse. He begins by portraying the overflowing sympathy with which Jesus forgot his own impending sufferings, in his desire to cheer the little band so soon to be scattered. We are there with them in the upper chamber; we are bathed in that flood of benignity; can we ever be faithless to this most lovely and all-loving friend? Thence, passing outwards, he lays open before us the universal humanity of the Son of Man made Son of God, till we see that the fulness of the Spirit in him, his oneness with the Father,

was his pure and perfect benevolence, — till we begin to apprehend how such a sublime self-sacrifice might fit the Christ to be the abiding mediator between heaven and earth, the ruler over the ages to introduce among mankind the kingdom of God. What affectionate devotion, what adoring reverence, what quick discrimination, what delicate perception, what vividness, characterized this sketch of the Master! Thus ends the first branch of the sermon. And now he is to assure us, all selfish, immersed in the busy anxieties of life, habitually incased in prejudices and conventionality, as we may be, that this spirit of unlimited brotherly kindness is the only befitting spirit for any man, for every man, — that we are encouraged to aspire after it, that we can attain to it, that we are Christians only in the measure in which it sanctifies us. How carefully he meets and disarms objections! how calmly he removes all fear of undue enthusiasm! how deliberate and definite does he make the statement of his propositions! The sound sense and judgment of the preacher strike us now as much as his devout earnestness did before. There is nothing vague, dreamy, extravagant, in this cool reasoner. Gradually he awakens the memory and conscience of his hearers, and reveals to them, from their own observation and experience, with a terrible distinctness of contrast, what the professed Christians of Christendom actually are. There are no expetives, no fulminations, no fanatical outpourings. But the small figure dilates, — the luminous gray eye now flashes with indignation, now softens in pity, — and the outstretched arm and clenched hand are lifted in sign of protest and warning, as the wrongs which man inflicts on man are presented with brief but glowing outlines. How the accidental honors of the so-called great flutter like filthy rags, and crumble into dust, as the meanness of arbitrary power and worldly ambition is exposed! How the down-trodden outcasts rise up in more than royal dignity, as the intrinsic grandeur of man reveals itself through their badges of ignominious servitude! The preacher now enlarges upon the greatness of man; he shows how worthy every human being is of love, for his nature, if not for his character. Sin and degradation are made to appear unspeakably mournful, when measured by the majestic innate powers, the celestial destiny, appointed to the most debased; every spirit becomes venerable to us, as heir of God and co-heir of Christ, as the once lost but now found, the once dead but now living, the prodigal yet dearly loved child of the Heavenly Father. And as our gaze wanders over the congregation, in kindling or tearful eyes, in pallid or flushed cheeks, in smiling or firm-set lips of many a hearer, is displayed the new resolve just registered in the will, to lead a truly *manly* life, by



consecrating one's self to the divine work of raising all men upright in the image of God.

A brief petition and benediction end the service ; and after a few warm pressures of the hand, and mutual congratulations that such a sermon has been heard, the congregation disperses. If this is the first time we have listened to the preacher, we walk home through the thronged streets, we look upon our fellow-men, we tread the earth, we breathe the air, we feel the sunshine, with a new consciousness of life. This hour has been an era in existence. Never again can we doubt God's love, disbelieve in Christ, despond for ourselves, despise our fellows, — never again sigh over the drudgery, the tameness, the tantalizing disappointments of this work-day world. How solemn in grandeur, how unspeakably magnificent, how wonderful, how fresh with beauty and joy, open now before us the present lot, the future career, of man ! This sketch may seem to some readers extravagant, but it will be thought, on the other hand, tame and cold by those who in memory recall the reality which it so faintly resembles.

It was doubtless owing to the energy with which Dr. Channing threw his whole soul into his ministrations, that he found the usual pulpit services so exhausting. Full of conscientiousness and deep emotion, ideal and aspiring to a most rare degree, concentrated and intense in all his mental and moral processes, unhabituated to relaxation and variety of employment, he constantly experienced extreme nervous prostration after preaching. Though benefited by the rest and refreshment of foreign travel, he immediately found, upon his return, that he should be entirely broken down, if he attempted to resume the whole of his duties. And so, with the sense of duty to his parish which was conspicuous throughout his ministry, he determined at once to lay before them his condition and the exact measure of his ability. His own wish was to have a colleague settled with him ; but he chose to leave the society free to make the first movement, and addressed them, therefore, as follows : —

“PORTSMOUTH, R. I., Sept. 4, 1823.

“CHRISTIAN FRIENDS :— My much esteemed assistant, Mr. Dewey, having made known to me his desire to be released from his present engagement, I am compelled to solicit again your attention to the subject of obtaining for me such aid as circumstances may render necessary. I have already stated to you, and I beg to repeat it, that the improvement of my health, though very encouraging, is not such as to warrant me to take on myself all the duties and services ordinarily expected from ministers ; nor ought I to

make the attempt, until the strength which I have gained is not only confirmed, but increased. Without undue solicitude for life, I desire earnestly to be capable, whilst I live, of some exertion which may be useful to my people and family; and this object demands, especially at the present moment, great care in proportioning my labors to my strength. The thought of being reduced again to the inactivity and uselessness to which I have been condemned for some time past almost overwhelms me; and although I trust, that, should God appoint me this trial, he would strengthen me to bear it, still I feel that I am not only permitted, but required, to use whatever means of averting it he may afford. I have no right, by laboring beyond my strength, to throw away the degree of health which I have gained by so many sacrifices; nor should I, in this way, consult your interests any more than my own comfort. Under these impressions, I have endeavored to judge to what extent I may now resume my labors. I have a strong confidence that I can take half the services on Sunday without injury. More than this I cannot attempt with safety, and the experience of several years makes me fearful that it will occasionally be prudent for me to abstain from preaching on both parts of the day. How long I may require these indulgences I cannot even conjecture; for the effect of returning to labors which have been so long discontinued is very doubtful. I am compelled, however, to say, that, as debility has oppressed me for years, I am authorized to anticipate only a gradual and slow increase of strength, and that there is no probability of my resuming speedily all the duties of my office. Under these circumstances, I am exceedingly desirous that such provisions should be made for the pulpit as will secure to my people the most edifying and acceptable services; and I feel as if this would prove a medicine to the body, by the relief and joy it would give to my mind. For this end, I have thought proper to make this free communication in regard to my state, prospects, hopes, and fears, and to assure you of my disposition to concur with you in whatever measures the welfare and religious improvement of the church may be thought to require.

“I cannot close this communication without renewing my thanksgivings to Almighty God for restoring me to you with some ability to serve you. Longer experience, and more extensive observation of human affairs, have only served to recommend to me the Christian ministry, and to strengthen my wish to live and die in the discharge of its duties. Imploring for you every blessing in this world and in the world to come, I subscribe myself

“Your affectionate friend and grateful pastor.”

At a meeting of the proprietors of the meeting-house in Federal Street, September 22, this letter was read, and the vote unanimously passed, "That it is expedient to settle a colleague with the Rev. Dr. Channing, provided it will meet with his concurrence, and provided that an arrangement can be made in relation to salaries satisfactory to the society and the pastors." A committee was also appointed to confer with Dr. Channing. His wishes were thus expressed in consequence : —

"BOSTON, Sept. 26, 1823.

"GENTLEMEN : — The votes of the proprietors of the church in Federal Street, at their meeting on September 22, 1823, having been communicated to me, I take an early opportunity to express my views and feelings in relation to the subjects to which they refer, and I shall aim to do this with all possible simplicity.

"The *first* question suggested by the votes is, whether I wish a *colleague*. On this point I have not spoken freely, because I have not wished to influence the opinion of my parishioners. I have chosen that they should act from their own deliberate and independent convictions in an affair so important as the settlement of another minister, — one of the most important in life, — the effects of which will extend beyond themselves to their children, and be felt in the society perhaps long after I am separated from it. But now that my opinion is requested, I have no hesitation in saying that I shall receive a colleague with pleasure ; not merely because I shall find the greatest relief in such an arrangement, but chiefly because I hope from it the greatest good to the society. I should be most grateful to God, had I strength equal to the whole duties of the ministry. For these duties are my happiness, and I am aware that there are strong motives for having them discharged by a single pastor.

"But conscious as I am that I have at no period had sufficient health to perform them thoroughly, and persuaded that I must now be assisted in them, the question offers itself, whether aid shall be sought for me in a variety and succession of young unsettled preachers, or in a permanent assistant ; and the last mode seems to me to possess decided advantages, provided the parish can secure an individual, whose piety, ability, and general acceptableness shall afford pledges of a useful ministry. From such a man they will receive instructions more adapted to their wants, character, and state, more matured by experience, and more imbued with a deep, affectionate interest in their welfare, than can be expected from young men and strangers ; and they will receive pastoral aids, not only from the pulpit, but of a more private and perhaps not less



useful nature. His instructions, too, will be heard with less of that curiosity and spirit of criticism by which the efficacy of preaching is weakened, and with more of that personal regard which adds weight to truth.

“Under such a man, I should hope to see an improvement of the condition of our society, — not of its outward condition, for this is sufficiently prosperous, but of its interior, religious, spiritual state. I should hope to see the marks and evidences of profounder veneration for Christianity, of more faithful application of it to the character, of a more living and fruitful piety, and of a stronger interest in the cause and diffusion of our religion. I feel that greater improvements are needed among us. Not that I have ground to complain of deficiency of attachment to myself. But what I desire is, a greater attachment to that cause, that religion, of which I am merely the instrument, and in comparison with which I am nothing, and deserve no consideration. With God’s blessing on the labor of another, joined to my own, I trust that the purposes of our connection would be answered more effectually than they have yet been; and this is my great motive for concurring, as I candidly do, in the opinion of the society on the subject of a colleague, as expressed in their vote. . . .

“I cannot close this communication without imploring Divine guidance for my people and myself, that we may adopt such measures as will strengthen our union, and build us up in the faith and hope, in the spirit and most exalted virtues, of our religion.

“With great affection and respect, your friend and pastor.”

On September 29th, the foregoing letter was read to the proprietors, who voted, “That the letter of the Rev. Dr. Channing to the Committee is highly acceptable to the proprietors of the Federal Street meeting-house,” and that the propositions of the letter and of the Committee be accepted. The Committee, in their report, had said that the proposed salary of Dr. Channing “is the result of his voluntary relinquishment, in the event of the settlement of a colleague, of a portion of his present income, the continuance of which he is entitled to claim. The motives and views on this head, expressed in his letter, are entirely satisfactory to the Committee. . . . They believe it to be unnecessary to enlarge on such a topic, and in relation to a connection so highly and justly valued by every member of the society.”

In the spring of 1824, the Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett was invited and ordained to be the Associate Pastor of the Federal Street Society. The relations between Dr. Channing and his colleague were, for the long period of eighteen years, most intimate, cordial,

and mutually beneficial. Dr. Gannett has expressed, for himself, in his address at the funeral services of his spiritual father, his tender and reverential affection "for one whom he honored not less because he may have loved him more than others who beheld him at a greater distance," and has thus borne his testimony to Dr. Channing's faithfulness in the delicate and difficult duties of their official intercourse:—"After my connection with this society, he encouraged me in every plan I undertook, welcomed every sign of increasing sympathy and energy among us, and cheered me under every occasion of despondency. How often would my spirit have wholly sunk within me, if he had not animated me to new struggle with the discouragement of my own heart!" And, on the other hand, Dr. Channing paid the following warm tribute to Mr. Gannett, on the occasion when that conscientious and indefatigable minister was for a time worn out by his excessive labors, and was compelled to seek, in foreign travel, a renewal of his powers of usefulness:—"Of the faithfulness of our friend to this congregation I need not speak. He toiled day and night for the cause to which he had given himself, until, at length, he sunk under his labors. Of his connection with myself, let me say that it has never for a moment been disturbed by a word, I may add, by a thought, which friendship would wish to recall. Mutual confidence, a disposition in each to concede to the other unrestricted freedom of opinion and operation, and, I trust, a disposition to rejoice in one another's success, have given us the benefits of this relation, unmixed with the evils to which it is thought to be liable. I rejoice, my friends, in the proofs you have given our friend of your interest in his welfare, of your gratitude for his services. I rejoice in the testimony you have borne to the worth of the Christian ministry. Our friend will carry with him, wherever he goes, the consoling, cheering recollection of your sympathy and kindness. May he be followed by our prayers, as well as affections! May he meet friends in strangers! May a kind Providence infuse new life and strength into his debilitated frame! May he return once again to instruct, comfort, improve, and bless this congregation!"

Throughout their long intercourse, from the time of his settlement to that of his death, Dr. Channing and the Federal Street Society vied with each other in liberality; and, as the facts do honor to both parties, and reveal interesting points of character, it seems but just to give some indications of the mutual respect and kindness which bound them together. The resignation of a portion of his salary by Dr. Channing, as a means of better enabling the society to provide suitably for a colleague, has been noticed. But,

from period to period, as he found that his friend's labors and responsibilities were multiplied, while his own were proportionately lessened, he gradually gave up the remainder of his salary, until the pecuniary tie between himself and his congregation became almost nominal. A few letters and votes, taken from the records of the Federal Street Society, illustrate the generous spirit upon both sides.

“MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN : — Having reason to apprehend that I shall be obliged to diminish my exertions for a time, and feeling increased doubts as to the degree of service which I may be able to render hereafter, I have thought proper to relinquish five hundred dollars of my salary after the present parish year, which will close with this month. I still hope to labor, and gradually to extend my labors among you, as a Christian minister. This object, however, requires that I should carefully abstain from every effort which may threaten any injury to my health, and I trust that, in exercising my discretion on this point, I shall not be considered as consulting my ease rather than my usefulness, or as deserting those great interests to which my life has been devoted. I am happy to add, that I have found much relief and satisfaction in the zeal and cheerfulness with which my colleague has performed the duties which have multiplied upon him in consequence of my impaired health ; and I pray that his connection with you may prove a continually increasing good.

“With Christian regards, I remain

“Your affectionate friend and pastor.

“April 4, 1825.”

“REVEREND AND DEAR SIR : — We duly received your communication of the 4th instant ; and we should immediately have acknowledged it, but for the hope we indulged that possibly a more speedy restoration to health and strength, than either your friends or yourself at that time anticipated, might afford us a reasonable ground for urging you to delay for the present a step which seems to loosen, in some degree, your connection with our society.

“It is with the most sincere pleasure we now learn that your disease has abated, and that your strength is returning to you, and we therefore take the liberty of making the suggestion, whether it may not consist as well with your own views on this subject, and with the views and wishes of your friends and connections, that the relinquishment of salary proposed in your communication to us should be deferred, or at least confined to a limited time, until a



few months' relaxation should enable you better to decide whether your health and comfort will render it impracticable for you to continue to perform so large a portion of the pastoral duties as you contemplated at the settlement of Mr. Gannett. . . .

"With the most earnest prayers that your health may be completely restored and confirmed to you, we are, dear Sir,

"Your sincere friends and parishioners,

"JOHN LEE, &c.

"BOSTON, April 19, 1825."

Dr. Channing's letter was consequently withdrawn by him. In his note, he says :—

"I made the proposition to relinquish a part of my salary, in the belief that I was consulting my own usefulness and the welfare of the society. I am persuaded, however, that you understand what the interests of the parish demand better than I do ; and if you apprehend that any injury will result from communicating my letter at the next parish meeting, or that greater good may be anticipated from withholding it, I am entirely willing that it should be passed over for the present.

"Your friend.

"April 28, 1825."

*"To the Committee of the Religious Society in Federal Street.*

"GENTLEMEN :—I have thought fit to relinquish four hundred dollars of my salary from the commencement of the present parochial year, so that the salary will be twelve hundred, instead of sixteen hundred per annum. My intention was to communicate this to you before the day of the annual meeting ; but, through mistake, I have not done it. I have some views which I may lay before you at a future time, and can only add, that I remain, with the best wishes for yourselves and the society,

"Your sincere friend.

"May 2, 1827."

"DEAR SIR :—I believe that this is the evening on which the Committee of the Federal Street Church meet, and I will thank you to inform the gentlemen that it is my wish to relinquish two hundred dollars of my salary after this time. I presume that no objections now exist to such an arrangement.

"Very sincerely, your friend.

"May 4, 1829."

"DEAR SIR :—I believe that this is the evening on which the committee of our parish meet ; and if so, I will thank you to ex-

press my desire that my salary may be reduced to the sum of eight hundred dollars, and that I may be released at the same time from the tax I pay for my pew.

“With sincere regard, your friend.

“May 3, 1830.”

On May 5th, a vote was passed by the proprietors in accordance with his wish. The three deacons were appointed “a committee to wait upon Dr. Channing, and to express the gratitude of the society to him for this act of liberality.”

“DEAR SIR: — I learned from your letter yesterday that a meeting of the proprietors of our church is to be held to-day, to settle some of its pecuniary concerns. I will thank you to inform the meeting, that, as I was absent from the country half of the last year, it is my wish and purpose to relinquish one half of a year's salary.

“Very truly your friend.

“October 24, 1831.”

October 24, it was voted unanimously, “That the clerk be directed to present the thanks of the proprietors to the Rev. Dr. Channing for his liberal offer, but respectfully to decline accepting it.”

“*To the Members of the Congregational Society in Federal Street.*

“BOSTON, NOV. 1, 1832.

“MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS: — This day being the commencement of the last half of our parochial year, I have thought it a fit time for a communication which, perhaps, ought to have been made before. The uncertainty of my health, and consequent uncertainty of my official services, have led me to think that a change, in one respect, should be made in the relation subsisting between us. It seems to me that my salary should cease; and, accordingly, I relinquish it from the present time. In taking this step, I have no desire to dissolve my pastoral connection with you. I wish to continue it, provided you shall believe that, in so doing, I may promote your best interests. I still hope that I may recover strength for occasional preaching. To be wholly cut off from this means of usefulness would be to me a great affliction. I feel, however, more strongly than I have done, that I ought never to preach without a decided conviction that my health will not suffer from the effort; and I believe that, in relinquishing my salary, my judgment on this point will be more unembarrassed than at present.

“I beg you to accept my thanks for the interest which you have

so long taken in me and my labors. No one of you can feel more than I do how broken and imperfect my sermons have been. Under my infirmities, however, I have found comfort in knowing that you were enjoying the faithful and able labors of my colleague. It is my earnest desire and prayer, that the religion of Christ may be preached to you in its purity, and with increasing success. This divine truth becomes more and more precious to me, under every new visitation of sickness and suffering. I can ask nothing better for my dearest friends than that they may know, by experience, its purifying influences and never-failing supports.

“ With great affection and respect,

“ Your friend and pastor.”

On November 19th, 1832, it was “ *Voted*, That a committee of five persons be appointed to express the unabated respect and affection of the society to the Rev. Dr. Channing, and their grateful sense of his past services, and to request that he will continue to act as their pastor on the same terms as at present, with the understanding that he shall not be expected to officiate, except when he can do it conveniently, and with perfect safety to his health.”

“ *To the Committee of the Federal Street Society.*

“ GENTLEMEN : — I will thank you to express, at some suitable time, to the members of our religious society my purpose of relinquishing, at the end of the parochial year, the compensation which I now receive for my services. It is a deliberate act, and I beg them to acquiesce in it. I am not solicitous, however, to give up entirely my relation as one of their ministers, should they desire its continuance. My long connection with the society, the tender recollections which spring up when I look back on the many years devoted to the ministry among them, and the hope that I may still confer some benefit, however small, incline me to continue the relation as long as it shall seem to me not to interfere with higher means of usefulness. They will naturally expect that my labors among them will be diminished, and will not be surprised, if I should use the freedom which I shall enjoy in giving a somewhat different direction to my exertions in the cause of humanity and religion. It is my earnest prayer that their deliberations and efforts for securing to themselves and their children the means of religious improvement may be blessed by God, — that their union may be unbroken, — that they may be more and more established in Christian faith and virtue, — and that, under the merciful discipline of



our Heavenly Father, we may all prepare ourselves for the indissoluble ties and everlasting happiness of the world to come.

“Your sincere friend,

“Jan. 9, 1838.”

This letter was written because the Society in Federal Street was desirous of settling a colleague to aid Mr. Gannett, at a period when he was very much enfeebled, and Dr. Channing considered the burden of three ministers altogether unnecessary. But as Mr. Gannett's health became restored, the plan was abandoned; and, at the request of the society, Dr. Channing resumed his former relations. The series of these communications was closed by the two following letters, which seemed prophetically to announce the close of his earthly ministry:—

*“To the Standing Committee of the Proprietors of the Church in Federal Street.*

“GENTLEMEN:—This day being the beginning of our parochial year, I think it a fit season for a communication which I have for some time intended to make. I have, as you may recollect, proposed more than once to relinquish my salary, but have as often been requested by the society to retain it. The last request was communicated to me by the Hon. J. Davis and the Hon. J. Welles, with a kindness which I shall always remember with gratitude. I observed to them, that one reason for relinquishing the salary was, that by receiving it I should excite expectations which I might not be able to fulfil. But I was assured, that I was to consider myself as wholly free, and to preach only when it might be convenient. I have never lost the hope of being strengthened for greater public labors; but as yet it has not been realized. Under this experience, I have gradually reduced my salary, and have resolved definitely to relinquish it from this day. It is also my wish and purpose that all my public functions should cease. I do not desire, however, that a formal dissolution of our connection should take place. Having sustained the relation of pastor nearly forty years, it will be gratifying to me that it should continue, whilst circumstances remain as they are. I wish that the members of the society may feel that they have a right to seek friendly and spiritual counsel from me, when in need of such, and that I may have a right to communicate with them, when I can hope to do them good. I beg, however, that it may be understood, that the prosperity of the society is far dearer to me than any personal gratification of this nature; and if it should be thought best that there should be a formal dissolution of the relation, I desire that this may immediately take place.

•

“ In thus bringing my public labors among you to an end, I cannot but acknowledge with gratitude that kind Providence which has sustained me so many years amidst much physical infirmity, and which has made it the employment of my life to study and teach the religion of Jesus Christ. After a long experience, I feel that life could not have been devoted to a more worthy end. My time has been given chiefly to the work of acquiring juster, clearer, more quickening views of truth and duty. In this pursuit I have spent my strength, and cheerfully surrendered most of what are called the pleasures of life. That in so doing I have obeyed a Divine impulse, I believe; but I may have followed it too exclusively. The inquiries and contemplations which belong to my profession may have encroached on its more active duties. My studies, which would have been light to a man of ordinary strength, have produced almost daily an exhaustion which has left me little spirit for social intercourse. It might have been better for myself and for others, had I more frequently torn my mind from the subjects which have absorbed almost my whole intellectual energy. For this error, if such it be, I ask and hope a lenient judgment, because I have not given myself to intellectual indulgence, but have carried into my seclusion a sincere, and I hope a growing, interest in my fellow-creatures, and in the Christian cause. Other and more serious deficiencies I might recall. Indeed, no one can feel more than I do the imperfections of my ministry. For these I desire forgiveness of God and man. Still I do not feel as if I had labored in vain. My public services have been listened to with interest, and I have had proofs, for which I am most grateful, that deeper effects than transient interest have been produced by my ministry. Not that I have accomplished what I wished. As a people, I fear we are greatly wanting in that spiritual elevation, that superiority to the world, that love of God, of Jesus Christ, and of mankind, which is the end of religious institutions. In truth, all our churches need a new life, a new comprehension of the spirit and high purpose of Christianity. This I say for the truth's sake, and in sorrow of heart, and not from any wounded feelings, under the consciousness of having exerted no greater influence. As far as I am personally concerned, I have nothing to complain of, no reproaches to utter. I have received for many years expressions of kindness, for which I offer my sincere thanks. It is, indeed, a gratifying consideration, that our long union has not been disturbed even by a word of contention. I am not aware that a thought or emotion of unkindness has risen within me towards one of my parishioners. Were I now to leave them, I could from the heart bid an affectionate farewell to *all*.

"I have spoken of the past. It is natural for me, at such a moment, to cast a look towards the future. It is possible that some sphere of action, not now anticipated, may open on me. It is more probable that my present sphere will be contracted. When I look round me, I see not one of the ministers who filled the pulpits of this city at my ordination. All have gone to their account; and not a few, settled since, have also passed away. He, who seemed destined to go among the first, survives alone. Can I help applying to myself the language of the Apostle, — 'The time of my departure is at hand'? Nor is the time very distant, when all to whom I have ministered will have entered the unknown world. It is my fervent prayer that we may meet in the temple 'not made with hands,' and that a holier worship than has united us here may bind us together for ever.

"I may on another occasion express my feelings more fully to the society. I earnestly desire that they may continue to enjoy the labors of their devoted pastor, and that, through this and other means of religion, their harmony may be perpetuated, and their spiritual improvement never cease.

"With respect and affection, your friend.

"May 1, 1840."

*"The Proprietors and Congregation of the Church in Berry Street to their Senior Pastor, the Rev. William Ellery Channing, D. D.*

"REVEREND AND DEAR SIR: — We have received from the standing committee of the proprietors the letter you addressed them on the first instant, announcing your purpose from that day to relinquish the small remainder of salary, which, at our earnest request, you had till then consented to receive from us; and expressing your desire, that, without formally dissolving the connection that has so long and so happily subsisted between us, your public functions as a minister of Christ to this society may cease.

"We do not wish to conceal from you that we receive this decision with regret and pain. Perhaps we feel it the more sensibly, because it seemed to be our duty to acquiesce in it, and thus make it final. For several years, we have known that you considered such a separation as you now propose desirable, on account of the state of your health; and if we have heretofore been unwilling to give it our concurrence, it has been from feelings of respect and attachment to yourself, that have grown old in many of our hearts, and sunk deep in all of them. We may, from these feelings, have resisted your wishes longer than we ought to have done, but we hope and trust we have not been unreasonable; and now that the



time has arrived when we are not permitted to hesitate in giving to them our full assent, it gratifies us that you do not seek to make the separation absolute and entire, but that you are desirous on your part, as we are on ours, to retain some of the bonds that have united us during a connection that has been permitted to be so happy and to last so long. . . .

Our connection, as you intimate, has been continued through a longer period than could at first have been anticipated, — a period, indeed, so long, that few remain among us who bore witness to its beginning. You came to us thirty-seven years ago, when our numbers were so few, and our circumstances so humble, that it was apparent you came only from a sense of duty, and from a disinterested desire to serve your fellow-men. Under your care, however, we soon prospered and grew numerous. But at every step of our progress, we felt, that, under God's good providence, we owed it chiefly to you. We have, too, as we trust, been thankful for the ministrations we have enjoyed. We have certainly felt them to be a privilege, — a great privilege, — and we have greatly valued them. Nor has their influence been confined to ourselves. They have been felt and acknowledged beyond the limits of our own society, beyond the limits of our own country; and we trust that even yet neither their work nor yours is wholly accomplished. We trust, that, long after both you and we are gone to render up our last account, your spirit, in the record of what you have here spoken, will be still active in the great cause of Christ and of human improvement, to which you have devoted your life. The only regret we feel, when looking back upon the period of your connection with us, is, that we have not profited as we ought to have done by the privileges we have enjoyed; that we have not become spiritual, and superior to the world, devoted to duty, as you have labored to make us. We pray God to forgive us for our deficiencies, and to make your teachings more effectual to the generations that are to come after us than they have been to us and to our own. . . .

“On behalf of the proprietors and the congregation of Berry Street Church,

“SAMUEL GREELE, *Chairman.*

GEORGE S. HILLARD, *Proprietors' Clerk.*”

In proportion as the ties were gradually loosened which bound Dr. Channing to the Federal Street Society, and as his indefatigable colleague became, by well-earned influence, peculiarly the pastor of the congregation, he felt himself more free to devote his time

and thoughts to larger interests of truth and philanthropy. In fact, for many years a change had been slowly taking place in his views of the relative importance of the different branches of ministerial labor. In his early professional life he had been, as we have seen, most devoted to his pastoral duties, and ill health, more than any other cause, had compelled him to limit his exertions in that direction. But experience at length suggested to him the question, whether his enforced life of secluded meditation had not, on the whole, been more serviceable to his fellow-men than one of more constant social intercourse and practical activity would have been. The course of his reflections may be partially indicated by giving the following extracts from one of his unfinished manuscripts :—

“The several duties of the minister may be laid down easily ; but it is not so easy to establish the relative rank of his various offices. Some would make the minister a student, some a visiting pastor, some a public speaker. Undoubtedly, the same rule cannot be applied to all. Different modes of labor are appropriate to different men, and to different conditions of society. Still the great idea of the Christian minister is plain. He is to be a teacher ; and, in order that he may teach, he must learn. His peculiar work is, to quicken the community by the promulgation of exalting truth. The acquisition of this truth, and the clear, powerful expression of it, are, then, his chief labors ; and these imply much solitary thought. He is to be a thinker. To this severe toil his life is to be mainly given. Of course, he is to preach, converse, counsel. But the sermon which he preaches in an hour may be the result of months and years of meditation. The truth which he utters in a sentence may have cost him long, laborious, exhausting research. . . . Only private meditation can lead him up to worthy conceptions of the great realities of the spiritual life. His chief work he must do alone. He must live much in his study, and live there, not as a hypocrite and cheat, amusing himself with light reading, whilst the world considers him a student, but in good faith tasking his powers for the discovery and forcible exhibition of truth. The study is too often an idle place, and yet a faithful student is the most laborious man on earth. These views are important, because the age is so much an out-door age. There is little solitary thought anywhere.

“Great stress is laid upon what is sometimes called pastoral duty, on the personal intercourse, that is to say, of the minister with his congregation ; but much visiting may be to a minister, as to others, a species of dissipation. Profitable conversation is a fruit of meditation, the overflow of a full heart and mind. To do

good, as he goes from house to house, a minister should carry with him living thoughts, which have been matured by vigorous inquiry, which belong to a system of truth forever enlarging and gaining strength in his mind. No one believes more than I do in the benefits of free conference between the minister and his parishioners; but their intercourse should be truly a conference, — the suggestion of awakening ideas, which open the inward experience. Such conversation requires, above all things, that a minister should rid himself of the technicalities and formal restraints of his profession, and exchange mere traditional notions of religion for fresh, clear, profound views. Where a minister does not lead a life of thought, it is to be feared that, as a visitor, he will become a gossip; and a religious gossip is no more profitable than any other. To tell religious news may do in its season and place, but to fill up any considerable portion of life with it is a sad waste of power; and a minister should respect his function too highly to spend his hours in such enfeebling talk.

“It is sometimes said, that a minister does more by winning the love of his people than by hard study, because he thus secures an access to their hearts which no mere intellectual power could give. A minister should, indeed, be loved; but this sentiment should be a moral, rather than a personal sentiment. It should be a respect for his high virtues, a trust in his uncompromising fidelity, a grateful sense of his devoted, conscientious labors for a glorious end, more than an attachment growing out of private sympathies. Respectful confidence, founded on the recognition of consistent principle, is better than affection. The minister must beware of an intercourse with his congregation which flatters their self-love, and endears him as a partial friend. The sympathetic minister may fail to be the faithful spiritual guide. The only sure ground for a man to stand upon is elevation and purity of character. Popularity, founded on individual sympathies, has no certain permanence. . . . .

“These remarks are the more important, because, in this country, the dependence of the minister on the good-will of his congregation strongly tempts him to make himself agreeable to his hearers. If he yield to this temptation, he is lost. If the desire of pleasing takes the place of aspiration after truth, the dignity of his mind is gone. We never should enter into communion with our fellow-men with the view of being agreeable as our chief end. We enter no circle without taking the chance of encountering opinions and feelings which we ought not to reciprocate, or of being called to utter what may give pain or offence. Our first purpose should be, to



hold fast to truth and justice, however we may fail of sympathy; and this is especially the duty of the minister, whose great function is to bear witness to the truth. The minister is only degraded by his profession, if he seeks transitory approbation, by accommodating truth to men's passions and prejudices. The whole power of his office lies in his moral self-subsistence; yet he is tempted to veer with every change of popular opinion. Let him, therefore, live much by himself, that he may learn to stand firm among his fellow-men; let him dwell habitually in the region of everlasting truths, that he may not be the sport of the caprices of the day."

The thoughts expressed in the foregoing extracts embody, though in a hasty and imperfect manner, Dr. Channing's views of his own special duties as a minister. This will appear from the following letter:—

"*January 23, 1828* <sup>1</sup> . . . . I have been refreshed to-day by a visit from our friend Tuckerman, who seems to be, and is, happier in visiting the hovels of the poor, than any spoiled child of fortune in haunting the saloons of taste, rank, and wealth. He enjoys his poor, and I enjoy his power of virtue in extracting from such material such rare happiness. Thus virtue is a spreading good indeed. Next to my own function, I am tempted to think his the best.

"And what is my function? Striving humbly, and not impatiently striving, to penetrate the clouds which encompass us, and to catch some new glimpses of the Uncreated Light, the Infinite Beauty, the Perfection of the Parent Mind, and of the Human Soul; and through this to understand myself and other beings,—to turn all things to their true and noblest ends. What I have lately published was meant to be a trial of the sympathy which I might hope for.

"When I told you that my last sermon had not answered my hopes, I did not mean to say that it had not been talked of enough, but that it had not excited the *kind* of interest which I have wished. Still I do not complain, or for a moment waver in my hope. I blame as much, to say the least, the imperfection of the writer, as the want of susceptibility in the readers. I believe that the seed has been sown in some minds where it will take root, and this fully satisfies and recompenses me. But there has been no general response to the sentiments, or rather a general indifference; so that to hear even of a few to whom they are living truths is a great encouragement; and my friends do me good, when they let me know of such cases. My own opinion of the value of what I pub-

<sup>1</sup> To Orville Dewey, D. D.

lish is not at all affected by the general reception it meets with ; but if no souls are reached, there is cause of distrust."

The rare blending of conscientiousness and humility, independence and self-distrust, firm faith and aspiration, so simply manifested in this estimate of his intellectual function, pervaded the writer's character, and determined the course of his literary life. Without the addition of a word of comment, the following series of letters will open to the reader the hidden springs of Dr. Channing's conduct as an author, and reveal, as no description could, the pure disinterestedness by which he was animated.

"*May 14, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> It is not unfrequent for an author to be praised, even admired, whilst he feels that the view of his work most interesting to himself has been seized by very few of his hearers. He is praised, but not understood. I remember a minister who, on being deprived of a particular hearer, expressed great sorrow ; 'For,' said he, 'I always felt, when he was present, that one of the congregation understood me.' I have had some sad proofs of the obtuseness of too many of my readers, in the kind of criticism passed on me. Some people have groaned at my *deserting* my profession, and becoming a *politician*. Some wise ones even intimated that I had an eye on a seat in Congress ! Things of this kind do not discourage me, but show what a darkness surrounds us on every side. I thank you for understanding me. Not that you are the only discerners of my spirit ; others have done me the same favor ; and, indeed, I am persuaded that there is an increasing tendency to see the application of moral and religious truths, of the highest principles of Christianity, to political affairs, to the relations of nations, and to all civil and social arrangements and institutions."

"*Boston, July 21, 1828.*<sup>2</sup> DEAR SIR :—Your letter gave me great pleasure. Many of your expressions of approbation I am compelled, by my self-knowledge, to limit, perhaps I should say, to disclaim. But, whilst I question the soundness of the estimate which many make of my labors, I do not the less rejoice in the proofs which occasionally come to me, that what I have written has been quickening and exalting to some of my fellow-beings. I have a deep conviction that Christianity was intended to communicate energy and elevation far beyond what we yet witness, and that our nature was made, and is fitted, for the sublimest influences of this religion. If I have helped to spread this conviction, — if I have

<sup>1</sup> To Ferris Pell, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> To the Rev. George Armstrong.

awakened in any soul a consciousness of its powers and greatness, — if I have thrown any light on the grandeur of God's purposes towards his rational creatures, — if I have done anything to expose the monstrous error, that curbs and chains are the indispensable and best means of educating the individual and the race, — or if I have vindicated for the mind that freedom which is the chief element and condition of its growth, then I have accomplished the end to which I have devoted my powers.

“ I thank you most sincerely for encouraging me to hope that I have not been wholly unsuccessful. I feel my poor labors — for I cannot estimate them very highly — recompensed beyond measure by such language as you have used. You have given me a kind of approbation which I may enjoy without injury to my virtue, for your letter breathes sympathy much more than it expresses praise. I thank you, and I thank God, for this. Truth, though not responded to, is still truth ; but how are we strengthened and encouraged, when, having sent it abroad, it comes back to us in tones which show that it has penetrated the inmost souls of some, at least, who have heard it ! ”

“ *August 27, 1828.*<sup>1</sup> Your letters do not make me vain, but thankful, by assuring me that I am not living for nothing, — that I even give strength and elevation to minds like yours. I am so tempted to think lightly of whatever I send forth, that I need such testimonies to sustain my courage.”

“ *Boston, March 30, 1829.*<sup>2</sup> MY DEAR MRS. BAILLIE : — I thank you from the heart for your letter. Expressions of interest in my writings, from the enlightened and virtuous, are a recompense for which I cannot be sufficiently grateful to Providence, and which I need as an encouragement. I am naturally inclined to self-distrust. I do not know that my case is singular ; but, whilst I have the deepest conviction of the truth and greatness of my leading views, and look to them as powerful means of quickening and elevating the human mind, I am so dissatisfied with my expression of them, that I sometimes hesitate about sending my writings to my friends, after they have gone through the press. My principal encouragement is, that the truths which I have published seem to have found their way to the hearts of some young men of fine powers and a noble spirit, who, as I trust, are to do much more than myself. I have for many years had a deep feeling of the present degraded state of moral and religious science. My desire and hope has been, to awaken in others the want of something purer and more ennobling. My success has certainly exceeded my expecta-

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Felicia Hemans.

<sup>2</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.



tion, but has done little to remove the consciousness of deficiency. I have written this that you may understand the good which has been done me by sympathy on your side of the ocean."

"*Boston, March 8, 1833.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR: — I smiled a little at your solicitude about the reception your article would find with me. It will be relieved, when I tell you that I have not read it.<sup>2</sup> You will not infer from this that you have been neglected. I have felt, for some time, that the less I read about myself the better. The most laudatory article on my writings ever published, as I suppose, appeared in the *Westminster Review*, two or three years ago, and I did not read it, though the number containing it was more than once in my hands. The vindication of me, in the *North American*, from Hazlitt's abuse in the *Edinburgh*, I have never read. I am always gratified by a few lines in a letter or newspaper, showing me that my writings are spreading, and are producing their effects on one and another mind. I read such notices now and then; for my tendency is to discouragement, to depressing views of whatever I do. None are more grateful for a word of heart-felt approbation; but I can dispense with anything more. So much for my interest in laudatory criticisms. As to those which expose my defects, I am glad to receive them from fair-minded men. Accordingly, I desired —, when reading your article, to extract the fault-finding passages; and you can judge how they affected me, when I tell you, that, on finishing the extracts, I asked, 'Is this all?'"

"*Boston, May 5, 1834.*<sup>3</sup> The truth is, I have been an author by accident, not by profession or of set purpose. Most that I have published was written without a thought of publication, and nothing was written to appear in my own name; so that I have not been exposed, in a great degree, to the sensitiveness which cleaves to authorship. I never could attach much importance to these almost fortuitous productions. The truths which I have insisted on seem to me, indeed, infinitely important, — more so than to anybody else. But I am conscious of having done no justice to them; so that I am little disposed to blame those who differ from me."

"*March, 1836.*<sup>4</sup> I was a little surprised by your application in behalf of a good duchess in the heart of Germany. I did not suppose that my name had ever been heard in that country, and I can hardly conceive of my finding much favor among a people of such

<sup>1</sup> To Orville Dewey, D. D.

<sup>3</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.

<sup>2</sup> Review of his writings, in the *Christian Examiner*.

<sup>4</sup> To George Ticknor, Esq., Dresden, Saxony.

different habits of thought, and whose learned men and men of genius leave me so very, very far behind. However, I will send my books with pleasure. I know they contain some great truths, written, not from tradition, but from deep conviction, from the depths of my soul, — may I not say, from inspiration? I mean nothing miraculous; — does not God speak in us all? No one does, or can, see the imperfections of what I have written as I do myself. But in the ‘earthen vessel’ there is still a heavenly ‘treasure.’ Of this I am sure. I will therefore send my books, with all their imperfections, to the duchess. They contain principles which it would be well for dukes and duchesses to learn, all the world over; and who knows but that I may give to one in high station a new sympathy with his or her fellow-creatures, a new reverence for humanity, a new perception of the nothingness of the outward compared with the inward? I live in hope; for is it not the will of God that *all men* shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth?”

“William E. Channing respectfully requests the Duchess of — to accept the books now forwarded. He has understood from an American friend residing at Dresden, who has communicated with Count —, that the duchess had expressed a desire to see his writings, and he trusts that she will do him the honor to accept from him such as he can now collect. No one can be more aware than himself of the imperfect manner in which he has unfolded his views; but, having entire and joyful faith in the great and life-giving truths which he feels himself called to teach, he takes pleasure in sending his writings to any who may be disposed to read them, and especially to those whose high station gives them peculiar influence over the minds of their fellow-beings. He begs the Duchess of — to accept his assurances of respect, and his sincere wishes for her happiness.”

It thus appears how incidentally Dr. Channing entered the sphere of literature. The *ethical* element was the predominant one in his nature; and although his love of beauty was too strong, independent of overmastering enthusiasm, ever to have permitted him to be a mere dilettante, it was not so active as to make him dissatisfied, until he had concentrated into a symmetric work of art his thought and emotion. He was too earnest as a prophet, to waste hours, which were only too swift in their flight for one so feeble, upon giving form to the inspiring truth which he knew he was called to communicate. Fully aware, as he was, too, that he had attained but to glimpses of most glorious realities, he could not be so presumptuous and irreverent as to attach high

value to what he humbly regarded as fragmentary suggestions ; and the conceptions struggling within him, over which he delightedly brooded in meditative days and wakeful nights, were so sweet and majestic, that any portraiture of them would have seemed incomplete and unfinished. He could give, at the best, but a sketch of his meaning, like a child's rough outline of some statue or landscape. His chief care, therefore, was to be true ; and he left his expression to take its hue and shape spontaneously. A glance at his manuscripts shows how unlabored was his style. The corrections are, for the most part, erasures ; and where words are exchanged for others, in all cases, it is by substitution of a simple phrase for a composite one. Systematically, from even early years, he disciplined his fancy to severe soberness ; though any one who knew him intimately could not but see how richly stored were his galleries of thought with exquisite natural images. He feared that the sense of the hearer or reader would be lured from the aspect of truth to the splendor of her robes by the use of metaphor, and so habitually checked his instinctive propensity to present laws and principles by the medium of symbols. His effort was, to utter himself plainly. The exercise of imagination, also, he restrained, limiting its sphere to giving a fresh and vigorous embodiment to his ideas in the most obvious form, though he was apt and able for original creation, if he had seen it to be a befitting work. The very play of the affections he subdued, and constantly sought for a calm, attempered, equable tone of statement, though his fervent will necessarily infused a glow of eloquence through the whole texture of his composition. And, finally, he would not allow himself to be abstract or scientific in his method or vocabulary, for fear that the public would be deterred from listening to, or prevented from apprehending, the divine thoughts which he was empowered to teach, unless won to attention by a familiar mode of treatment. In a word, he saw an immediate duty to be done, which was, to rouse lethargic fellow-beings to a consciousness of the grandeur of man's spiritual existence ; and he resolutely consecrated himself, by iteration and reiteration of one sublime lesson, now breathed softly in whispers, now rung out like an alarum, to break the dream of the world, and to summon the multitude to the labors and joys of a brightening morning.

The history of his various publications confirms this view of Dr. Channing as a literary man. He became an author unawares. When the "Anthology Club" commenced the course of labors which did so much to give an impulse to the intellect of New England, he was invited to be a contributor to their journal ; and, in



consequence, he communicated to its pages two or three essays, a few fragmentary thoughts, and one or more short pieces in verse, which were probably the only attempts he ever made at poetical composition. But he could not enter cordially into what he felt to be, for himself, at least, but "busy idleness." His work was to preach. As great political occasions called from him sermons which contained declarations of sentiment and opinion adapted to the wants of the times, he reluctantly yielded to the demand for their publication, and allowed them to be printed, as first written, with scarcely a verbal amendment. In the *Christian Disciple*, he sought to do what he might to pour oil upon the stormy waves which were then swelling beneath the tempest of controversy; and only when he could in conscience no longer keep silence, addressed to his fellow-Christians his remonstrance against spiritual despotism in his letters to Mr. Thacher and Dr. Worcester. Thus, in the first era of his ministry, it is seen how accidentally he found himself summoned from his quiet study and round of parish duties, to modes of address for which he felt no taste. And in the last era of his life, until within a very few years before his death, he had the same disinclination to make any special call upon the attention of his fellow-men. Apart from the restraints of his native modesty, and the influence of his lofty ideal, measured by whose standard most of the literature of the age appeared tame and frivolous he was so eager to climb to serenest heights, that it satisfied him to send forth a cheering cry to brethren struggling upwards through the shadows, as prospects of beauty opened amidst the fog. His publications were still occasional addresses, drawn from him by request. Friends urged him continually to embody his thoughts in a more permanent form, to which he replied, that they were not quite ripe. And when besought at least to revise, select, and print in a volume what he had already given to the public, he could not be prevailed upon to think it of sufficient importance to authorize his expending on such a work hours which he felt bound to consecrate to progressive inquiry.

At length the desire to aid in giving a higher tone, and securing a wider sphere of influence, to the *Christian Disciple*, which in 1824 was enlarged, and took a new form under the name of the *Christian Examiner*, drew from him some essays, which attained a most unlooked-for celebrity, and made him universally known in the world of letters. The attention excited by these papers was a great surprise to him, and he always considered the estimate placed upon them by the public exaggerated. To redeem his promise of communicating an impulse to the review which was the special

organ of Liberal Christianity, and to set an example of a bold, free, manly treatment of great subjects in literature, politics, education, science, &c., he poured out, with his usual rapidity of composition, trains of thought which at all times interested him, and which were freshly recalled by the successive appearance of Milton's Christian Doctrine, Scott's Life of Bonaparte, and Selections from Fénelon; but his chief aim was, to awaken his own immediate circle of believers to a more comprehensive, cordial, direct application of religion to life. The themes, however, were most interesting to him, and the very spontaneousness with which he expressed himself was favorable to the true manifestation of his character and mind. These hasty effusions, which, considered as literary models, he valued but little, let a sympathizing reader very deeply into the essential spirit of the man. His tender sensibility, delicacy of taste, chivalric heroism, loyal love of truth, high integrity, expansiveness, aspiration, pervade the notice of the sublime poet and stern republican. His profound veneration for man, grand estimate of the end and method of life, and devout confidence in God's infinite purposes of benignity to his human family, give to his searching analysis of the springs of action in the military despot an awful sincerity; and as the culprit is brought before the piercing eyes of the congregated spiritual world, stripped of the tinsel rags of false glory, pity prompts the reader to recall every good trait and deed, as a mantle to cover his shame. The uncompromising conscience of the writer here appears with the grave, firm aspect of an impartial judge upon the bench. The methodical habit of his mind is also shown, in the manner in which he passes from the condemnation of lawless power in an individual instance, to the discussion of the rightful function and scope of government, closing with an unreserved expression of reverence for the judiciary. The second part of the essay on Bonaparte — it may be said, in passing — was written with more care, probably, than any of the occasional pieces of that period. It is in the notice of Fénelon, however, that what was most characteristic of Dr. Channing appeared. In countless little strokes and touches throughout that paper, he sketched his own likeness with a fidelity which no second hand will ever rival; and the almost angelic ideal of piety there given was an unconscious portrait of the beauty of his own holiness.

Soon after the publication of these essays in the Examiner, the desire to aid a friend induced Dr. Channing to collect and revise what he thought worth preserving in his past writings, — a private feeling of kindness presenting a motive, which sense of duty as an author did not supply. And thus the volume of Miscellanies came

to be printed in 1830. In the Preface to the first edition, he thus indicates his own estimate of his literary labors : —

“ The reader cannot be more aware than I am, that these various tracts, called forth by particular occasions, and never intended to appear in their present form, need many and great changes ; but they probably would never have been republished, had I waited for leisure to conform them to my ideas of what they should be, or to make them more worthy of the unexpected favor which they have received. They were written to meet the wants of the times, and to place what I deem great truths within reach of the multitude of men. If the reader will bear this in mind, some defects will more readily be excused. The second Review in particular should be referred to the date of its original publication. . . .

“ I esteem it a privilege that my writings have called forth many strictures and been subjected to an unsparing criticism. I know that in some things I must have erred. I cannot hope, that, even in my most successful efforts, I have done full justice to any great truth. Deeply conscious of my fallibleness, I wish none of my opinions to be taken on trust, nor would I screen any from the most rigorous examination. If my opponents have exposed my errors, I owe them a great debt ; and should I fail, through the force of prejudice, to see and acknowledge my obligation to them in this life, I hope to do so in the future world.

“ I have declined answering attacks made on my writings, not from contempt of my opponents, among whom are men of distinguished ability and acknowledged virtue, but because I believed that I should do myself and others more good by seeking higher and wider views, than by defending what I had already offered. I feared that my mind might become stationary by lingering round my own writings. I never doubted, that, if anything in these were worthy to live, it would survive all assaults, and I was not anxious to uphold for a moment what was doomed, by its want of vital energy, to pass away.”

The publication of a second volume made up of Sermons was owing to a like motive of private benevolence. He had pledged a subscription of five hundred dollars to the Boston Farm School ; and being at the time so situated pecuniarily that he could not otherwise well meet the claim, he resorted to this plan as a means of raising the sum. It so happened, however, that he was immediately seized with severe illness, without having been able to correct and prepare more than one discourse for the press. The rest of the volume was selected and arranged by his friend Dr. Dewey, and the



sermons now appear as they were first written for the pulpit. And, finally, it was a characteristic close of his literary career, that the chief inducement which led him to put forth the complete edition of his works, in six volumes, was a desire to make the publication serviceable to a brother, who was then turning his attention to printing and editing as a branch of business. From first to last, authorship was the accident of Dr. Channing's life. With greater physical vigor, he would have been an evangelist, preaching far and wide, with the living voice, the exalting views which had been opened to his earnest, prayerful, patient seeking, or an active reformer, applying directly to the wants of the age the great principle of love with which he felt that Providence was inspiring mankind.

Dr. Channing's publications were the means of introducing him to a society of most refined and high-minded correspondents, and extracts from his letters to them will still further illustrate his literary character.

"*Newport, October 4, 1821.* It wants massiveness, depth, fullness of thought, that, is, it wants the essential properties of high poetry. I smile when I hear poetry called *light* reading. The true poet has far-reaching thoughts, a perception of the harmonious and exquisite relations of the universe, an eye that pierces the depths and mysteries of the soul, placing him amidst the most gifted and exalted intelligences."

"*June 28, 1824.*<sup>1</sup> I can hardly express the feeling the news of Lord Byron's death has given me. That a mind so gifted should have been left to devote its energies to the cause of impiety and vice, and should be so soon and suddenly taken, without making reparation to insulted truth and virtue, — that such a mind is to live for ages in its writings only to degrade and corrupt, — in all this we see the mysterious character of God's providence. I always hoped, that, after the fever of youthful passion, this unhappy man would reflect, repent, and prove that in genius there is something congenial with religion. But he is gone — where human praise and human reproaches cannot follow him. Such examples of perverted talent should reconcile the less gifted to their obscure lot.

"In his whole life he was by way of eminence a lawless man, spurning all restraint, whether divine or human, whether from his own conscience or from society; and he seems to have valued no power more than that of defying and resisting all wills which interfered with his own. That any talent, however stupendous, should have made such a man an idol to your sex, shows that you must

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.

divide with us the reproach, too justly brought against our age, of great moral degradation. . . .

"You ask me what I think of Moore's doctrine, that men of the first genius are naturally unfitted for friendship or domestic life. I have no faith in it. . . . The highest genius, I believe, is a self-guiding, calm, comprehensive power. It creates in the spirit of the Author of the Universe, in the spirit of order. It worships truth and beauty. There is truth in its wildest inventions, and it tinges its darkest pictures with hues of beauty. As to Moore's notion, that genius, because it delights in the ideal, is soon wearied and disgusted with the real, it is false. The contrary is rather true. He who conceives and loves beauty in its highest forms is most alive to it in its humblest manifestation. He loves it not by comparison, or for its degree, but for its own sake; and the same is true of beauty. The true worshipper of beauty sees it in the lowliest flower, meets it in every path, enjoys it everywhere. Fact is against Moore. The greatest men I have known have been the most beautiful examples of domestic virtue. Moore's doctrine makes genius a curse, and teaches that the Creator, the source of harmony, has sown discord between the noblest attributes of the soul. I shall not wonder if some half-witted pretenders to genius should, on the strength of Moore's assertion, prove their title by brutality in their domestic and social relations."

"*Portsmouth, R. I., June 16, 1828.*<sup>1</sup> I received distinctly the impression that Shelley was a noble nature sadly perverted, and that, under happier influences, he might have proved the glory of his race. . . .

"I should like to know something of Shelley from one worthy of belief, and capable of estimating him. I am inclined to think him a man lost to religion through the folly, hypocrisy, and intolerance of its 'friends.' How many noble spirits have been ruined by identifying religion with its loud professors! But I mean not to make excuse for such persons. They have no right to take their ideas of religion from the pulpit and vulgar cant. They have access to her true oracles and expounders, to the teachings of the universe and of Jesus Christ; and these teachings it is their duty to lay open to their less gifted brethren, not to unsettle the foundations of human hope, and to precipitate weaker minds from the Rock of Ages into the gulf of doubt, darkness, and despair. I mean not, however, 'to shut the gates of mercy' against the sceptic. That he is sometimes more virtuous than many a believer who condemns him, I doubt

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Ruth P. Olney, Providence.

not. The mass of people who never think understand little the trials of a superior mind which must think, which cannot but question Nature and Providence, and which has been taught to associate almost indissolubly with moral and religious principles opinions which it sees to be without foundation.

“On such a mind, when it seems to me to err, I dare not pronounce sentence, and I see with pleasure whatever proofs it gives of principle, of respect for duty, amidst its aberrations.”

“*June, 1827.* I have sometimes felt, in reading Mrs. Hemans’s works, that her sense of the evils of life is too keen, and colors her views too much. I love to be touched, moved, but not depressed. No genius, no power of execution, can recompense me for what I suffer from the tones of sorrow coming to me from a highly gifted mind, in which the deepest impressions are those of suffering, and over whose brightest inventions there is a hue of sadness. My confidence in the great purposes of God towards us, my persuasion that all suffering is meant to purify and exalt the soul, to be the occasion of moral strength and victory, leads me to feel that a deep peace and an unbroken resolution in all changes are due alike to ourselves and to our Creator. I may err. Perhaps a life of prosperity has made me incapable of understanding the sorrow-stricken spirit. But it seems to me one of the great purposes and blessed influences of Christian faith to reconcile intense sensibility with peace and energy.”

“*Boston, March 30, 1830.*<sup>1</sup> You have not yet, I trust, fulfilled your mission on earth, though, were it now to end, you would leave behind you emanations of your spirit to act far and wide and in ages to come. I thank you for the last volume you sent me. The last two pieces but one were new to me, and seemed to me to express with great truth and pathos that union of upward aspiration and earthly attachment, which I should call a just tribute to both worlds, and which shows the unity of our whole being. . . .

“I know that the effort which you ask is a slight one; but, to a man overburdened already, a slight addition of labor is something serious. The motive which you suggest is a more powerful one with me than you can well imagine. I perhaps owe it to myself to say, that I know no one quite as anxious as I am to multiply intellectual, moral, and religious bonds between my own and other countries. Few estimate as humbly as I do the moral worth of what is called national spirit, compared with the spirit of Christianity. I have hoped, by turning men’s thoughts on their own na-

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Felicia Hemans.



ture, — a nature which all hold in common, — to do something toward substituting a more generous and universal bond for those selfish and narrow ones which, as yet, have done more towards dividing than uniting the human family. Of course I have no desire to exclude national attachments, but I would have a new spirit of humanity, founded on respect for human nature, spread abroad, and if, by being a contributor to any literary work on your side of the ocean, I can strengthen a virtuous sympathy between our countries, I will do so very cheerfully, when I have time and strength, both of which are now wanting.”

“*Boston, May 4, 1838.*<sup>1</sup> I have read with great pleasure the first six volumes of Scott's *Life*, though sometimes wearied by letters which might as well have been omitted. The work lets the reader into the formation of the subject's mind, or into the circumstances which determined it, and this is no small merit. Not that I think the mind the creature of circumstances; but some men are reflections of the outward more than others, and this I think was eminently the case with Scott. His was not a mind to penetrate itself, haunted with its own mysteries, and conscious of mightier conflicts and processes within than any abroad. He lived abroad. He was a keen, shrewd observer of whatever passed around him. No man ever understood more of what is called life, and of the more superficial workings of the human heart. Philosophy he had none, and he interpreted very poorly the passions which he painted, or suspected little what they indicate. Thus he seems to me to have been formed from abroad, and hence he is a good subject for biography. The greatest minds admit no biography. They are determined from within. Their works spring from unfathomed depths in their own souls, from silent, secret thoughts, inquisitions, aspirations, which come they know not whence, go they know not whither.

“You see I do not place Scott among the greatest; and yet, when I think of his vast range of observation, of his power of appropriating all he saw to his purposes, of his inexhaustible invention, of his wide sympathy, and of the spirit of humanity pervading his writings, I feel something like self-rebuke, as I think that I may have spoken of him disparagingly. He discovered want of moral greatness in his want of reverence for his own mind, in his unconsciousness of the holy purpose to which genius may always be consecrated, in his childish admiration of hereditary honors, and his incapacity of conceiving of a higher state of human nature and of

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.

society than now exists. He was, as I have more than once said, the ideal of a man of the world, — the highest, most attractive manifestation of that character which I have known. Let me add, that in one thing I sympathize with him, and that is, the affectionate reverence which he bore to yourself."

"The increasing reputation of Coleridge and Wordsworth I think a good omen, though I differ from them on so many points. They have not written for the multitude, and yet live and grow, whilst the writers for the multitude are forgotten. I mean, by this phrase, those who write to *please* the multitude. I honor those who write *for* the multitude, in the true sense of the word, and should value little the highest labors of genius, did I not believe that the *mass*, the race, were to be the wiser and better for them."<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER II. — RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY.

DR. CHANNING was, as we have seen, a prophet. But in proportion as his views grew clear and complete to his own mind, and as he found his words of calm faith and earnest hope welcomed by the few, while rejected as visionary by too many, even of the good, he became desirous to give some fuller statement of the truth which he knew he was empowered to teach. He longed to justify to sober good sense the thoughts which, uttered in a fragmentary way, might and did seem enthusiastic. For his aim was eminently practical, and he felt that his work would not be done, unless he succeeded in filling men with a fresh and profound reverence for human nature in themselves and their brethren, a reverence which should practically manifest itself in reformed modes of life, individual and collective. For many years he had been, by reading, observation, and patient thought, accumulating a large mass of materials; and at length it seemed to him that the time had come when he was in some measure worthily fitted to write a work on Man, — his nature, relations, destiny, and duties. The first allusion to this purpose which we find in his correspondence appears in the following letter to the Rev. Dr. Carpenter.

"*Boston, March 20, 1824.* I wish I could send you, in return for your present, some of my own writings. But my state of health obliges me to be almost idle. I have long given up regular appli-

<sup>1</sup> To Orville Dewey, D. D.

cation, and am obliged to spend the greatest part of life in using the means of living. Sometimes I hope that I shall be spared to execute a work of some extent, for which I have made preparation; but time flies away, and nothing is done but the accumulation of more materials, and my plan continues to grow, whilst the space for accomplishing it is contracted. But this is the history of a thousand students, — especially of our profession; and it is certainly well for the world that so many schemes of authorship prove abortive."

Other references to this proposed work appear in his letters, and we give a few passages, which will serve at once to illustrate his plan, and to show how his desire was constantly baffled, alike by physical infirmity and the constant drafts made upon his time and power by transient questions of immediate importance.

"*Newport, July 9, 1827.*<sup>1</sup> It will gratify you to know that all your counsel has not been lost upon me, — whom you have probably thought more unimpressible than any of your new flock at the North End. I have begun to accomplish one of the works to which I have long looked. — rejoices, and I feel, that, after having provoked you by my insensibility to exhortation, I ought to give you a share in her joy. What I shall do I am not sure. I sometimes hope that God may give me a place, however low, in the class of his most honored servants, — I mean, of those who throw some new light on the subjects in which human nature has the deepest interest. At the same time, I am not forgetful that one of our infirmities is, to magnify the importance of our own views, and that greater intellectual toil than mine has often proved unprofitable."

"*Sept., 1837.*<sup>2</sup> It has long been my purpose to give a connected, systematic view of my most important convictions on the subjects to which my life has been devoted. I have made large accumulation of materials, but have wanted strength to labor on them effectually. I am now in better health, and have begun my work. What I shall be able to accomplish I know not. I cannot but fear that I shall disappoint my friends, not only in consequence of the want of physical energy, but from intellectual defects, of which I am deeply conscious. I am not, however, discouraged in the least by such thoughts. We must do what we can, and be grateful if we can do but little. The immediate reward of seeking the highest truth is inexpressible. It is a reward to know that even a few minds have received light and strength from our labors."

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To William Plumer, Esq., Epping, N. H.



"*July 10, 1838.*<sup>1</sup> By the kindness of Providence I have now what is called tolerable health, yet for four months I have been disabled from labor. I long to write, for I feel as if I had delivered but a small part of my message. My whole life seems to me but a preparation for a work which I have not done, and which I may not be able to do in this world. This is one of the corroborations of a higher life. I feel that I have not exhausted all my spiritual activity, — that there is an indefinite, I had almost said infinite, power and life within, which physical infirmity has not enabled me to bring out. Is this divine energy to perish? Is there nothing of prophecy in these aspirations after higher spheres of action? These anticipations are joyful, though I cannot say that they fully satisfy me. I want to act *now*, — to act in a world, the darkness, sins, and suffering of which weigh often as a heavy burden on my spirit. It seems to me that there never was so much to be done on earth as at this moment, — never so great a demand for clear and bold expositions of truth, and for manifestations of the pure spirit of Christianity. There never was more to contend with, and never more aids for the conflict. The authority of the past never was more unsettled, and the possibility of acting beneficently on the future never was greater. You and I, however, my dear sir, are too far advanced to do what we would, or to see the results of others' agency. No matter. The fountain of moral power is inexhaustible, and Providence will raise up mightier champions of truth and virtue."

"*May, 1839.* I look forward with peculiar hope to this summer. I feel now as if I had done my duty in regard to great immediate public interests, and my desire and hope is to give myself to what seems to me the work of my life, — the exposition of my views of truth and duty. I am not sanguine, yet hopeful. I have something to say, yet I feel I may not be spared to do it; — nor shall I count my life's labor lost if I fail; for all our action here is but the child's preparation for the spiritual manhood which awaits us, and in ripening for this we live gloriously, though we produce no perceptible outward effect now."

Before proceeding to a notice of this work on Man, however, let us first contemplate the position of thought which the author occupied, and breathe in the liberal, inspiring atmosphere in which he dwelt. We shall thus catch the tone of his mind, and be better prepared to understand, if not to sympathize with, his views.

We will commence with some sketches given by himself, in an-

<sup>1</sup> To J. Blanco White.

nual addresses to his people, of the discipline by which he had been trained to freedom and tolerance.

1827. "It has been my lot, as you well know, to perform among you the duties of a minister in a peculiarly trying time,—in a day of angry passions, and of revived intolerance and bigotry. I was about to say that it had been my misfortune to live and preach in this stormy season. But no; I have learned that the great design of the present life is to form the mind and character by difficulty and conflict, and I doubt not that the all-wise God has assigned to me, as well as to others, the conflict which I need. . . .

"Soon after coming into life, I saw that a new era was opening in this country and in this age,—that a violent struggle was commencing for the restoration of doctrines which had gradually fallen into neglect. The cry of ORTHODOXY was opened, and a system of measures adopted for stifling free inquiry. Vague apprehensions were industriously spread abroad of a secret conspiracy against what were called the 'Doctrines of the Reformation,'—the 'Essential Doctrines of Christianity;' and the brand of heresy was affixed to doctrines which had been espoused by some of the wisest and greatest men in this country and Europe. It was not so much for the purpose of defending these opinions, as of encouraging fellow-Christians to use their own minds, and to examine freely the doctrines of religion, that I entered the field of controversy. I felt then, what I now more deeply feel, that the human mind is to make progress by freedom, by the deliberate, impartial, and independent exercise of its faculties. I could not submit to have my intellect chained by men whom I knew to have no warrant for their sway, and in some of whom I saw plain marks of inferiority, both as to understanding and heart. I could not endure to see chains fastened on others. I felt the ignominy which we of this enlightened Commonwealth should incur, and with which we should be justly chargeable, if a few men—for few they were, and few they still are—should be permitted to dictate to us our opinions on the most important subjects in the whole range of thought, and should frown into silence the ingenuous lovers of truth. The attempt to fasten on us an antiquated faith, by excommunicating those who were seeking nobler views of Christianity, first summoned me to conflicts from which I have not yet been released. The part which I have taken I have had no cause to regret. My love of freedom has grown with the growth of my mind. It is now interwoven with all my religious feelings, and with all my sympathies and benevolent sentiments; for I am persuaded that

the glory of God, or just and ennobling conceptions of his character, and the happiness and progress of the human race, demand nothing so urgently as that our faculties should be unimpeded, and the widest range be given to thought. If we are to grow, it must be by a free use of our powers. If we are to attain brighter and more enlarged conceptions of Christianity, we must begin with feeling that past ages have not exhausted Christian truth, and that we may make advances on the wisdom of our fathers. I know nothing which indicates greater ignorance of the history of the church and of the history of mankind, nothing more fitted to reduce the intellect to imbecility, and to carry back the race to barbarism, than the idea that we have nothing more to learn, that Christianity has come down to us pure and perfect, and that our only duty is implicitly to receive the lessons of our catechisms. I am sure that this is not true. That Christianity has been dreadfully disfigured, all true hearts must know. That it was purified from all corruptions by the first Reformers is to suppose them gifted with miraculous lights as bright as those which beamed on the Apostles. Christianity is not thus purified. None of us hold it in its purity. I feel deeply the imperfections of all classes and denominations; and the hopes of Christianity rest on the courage and piety of men who, disclaiming all human authority, and the fetters of all creeds, give themselves to deliberate, devout, fearless study of God's word, in connection with his works and providence. Freedom of intellect, joined with obedience to whatever truth is already known, is the appointed spirit and energy by which the church and the world are to be disenthralled from the many errors which yet darken religion and impair its ennobling influence.

“If my own faculties have made any progress, I owe it to nothing so much as to the spirit of intellectual freedom which I have imbibed; and the place of this, I believe, no endowments of nature, no books, no association with learned men, would in any measure have supplied. It was my lot to come forward at a period when the question was to be settled whether this freedom should be enjoyed, or whether an inquisition, with ministers at its head, should bind the chains of death on the mind of this country. God's good providence, joined with an early disposition to live and to think alone, and with an education which had made freedom dear, decided the part which I took. The decision which I made in this great controversy, the cause which I espoused, and I hope I may say the consistency with which I have adhered to it, you know. My ministry, amidst all its imperfections, has, I think,



been uniformly marked by an assertion of the rights and duty of every individual to exert his own faculties ; and by urging on every man the duty of using his best powers, in the free, unbiassed investigation of religious truth, I trust that I have not been wholly useless. That I have contributed something to give to others courage in thinking and in expressing their thoughts, I trust ; and I have not a doubt that, at this moment, this whole country is indebted to the exertion made in this our city for the degree of religious liberty which it enjoys."

1830. "On one point, you will bear me witness. I have never aimed to alienate you from any body of Christians. I am not conscious of having yielded to a *sectarian spirit*, even when I contended most earnestly for my peculiar views. I have never thought myself a better man because I have escaped what seem to me gross errors prevailing in Christendom, nor have I, as I believe, ever shut my eyes on the virtue and piety of those by whom these errors may have been sustained. I have felt that it is not the greatness of our light, but our faithfulness to our light, whether great or small, by which character is to be judged. If I have ever infused unkind or disparaging feelings towards other Christians, I have grievously injured you, and, instead of being a minister of righteousness, have been the minister of sin. May you triumph over any such unhappy influence! . . . .

"One of your trials arises from the state of the Christian world, to which reference has now been made ; and I would offer you, on this point, a few words of counsel. Our principal duties in such circumstances may be expressed in two plain precepts : — *Respect those who differ from you, and also respect yourselves.* Give due honor to men of different sects. Do not feel as if you had monopolized truth or goodness. Treat none with derision. Esteem no man the more for thinking as you do, and no man the less for thinking otherwise ; but judge all men by the principles which govern their *lives*. Ascribe not what you deem error to weakness of intellect or corruption of heart, but rejoice in witnessing superior powers and tried virtue in the neighborhood of what you cannot but account superstition or prejudice. Never think of Christ's church as shut up within limits of human invention, but as comprehending all sects, and let your attachment to the whole triumph over your interest in any of its parts. Honor all men.

"At the same time respect yourselves. Claiming no superiority, allow not this claim in others. Expect and require from others the same deference which you feel yourself bound to pay. As you set up no pretensions to exclusive sanctity in yourselves, distrust them

in your neighbor. The exclusive saint bears one broad mark of the want of sanctity. The real Christian is the last man to be a pretender. Never suffer your opinions to be treated with scorn in social intercourse, any more than you would your characters; but whilst you force them on none, let men see that you reverence them as the truth, and that you expect decorum and courtesy in those who converse with you on this, as on other deeply interesting subjects. Always feel yourselves standing on the ground of equality with every sect and party, and countenance none by your tameness, or by shrinking from your convictions, to assume towards you a tone of dictation, superiority, or scorn. Be true to yourselves and to your principles. One of the great lessons taught me by my experience is, that self-respect, founded, not on outward distinction, but on the essential power and rights of human nature, is the guardian of virtue, and itself among the chief of virtues."

The last sentence of the foregoing extract gives us insight into one of Dr. Channing's chief springs of action. Though naturally diffident and modest by principle, though conscientious and cautious almost to an extreme, and though even reverential to his fellow-men of every grade of intellect and character, he was at the same time singularly self-relying. On his calm and gentle countenance there reposed an expression of firm dignity, which commanded a just deference. His very consciousness of the greatness of the human spirit in its essential powers and heavenly destination made him incapable of trifling with another or of submitting to be trifled with. He felt, too, that the claims of honor and manly courtesy, as well as of Christian charity, were sadly slighted by religious controversialists, and sought, therefore, to carry into the sphere of theological discussion the same generous and magnanimous, while self-balanced and brave, spirit which becomes high-minded persons in all their intercourse. This trait was so characteristic, that it may be well to illustrate it by some passages from his papers and letters.

1826. "The temper of the discourse <sup>1</sup> is censured. Why? Because it expresses anger or unkindness towards opponents? Is there the least impeachment of their motives? Not a word to this effect can be found in the discourse. The author has only set forth in plain and strong language what seems to him to be irrational and dishonorable to God and injurious to the human character in the system which he is opposing. He expressly states that

<sup>1</sup> Sermon at the Dedication of the Second Congregational Church, New York.

he has no disposition to make the opinions he condemns measures of character, and cordially acknowledges the virtues of multitudes who espouse them. And is it, then, 'uncourteous,' 'reprehensible,' 'unjustifiable,' 'inexcusable,' to say that an opinion is absurd and of degrading tendency? . . . . We invite our fellow-Christians to examine freely our opinions, and to tell us plainly what they see in them dishonorable to God or injurious to man. The freer such discussion, the better. Let opinions be spoken of unreservedly. We blame no class of Christians for exposing the absurdities and weak points of prevailing creeds. We only say to them: 'Do not judge the motives of your brethren in embracing the opinions which you reject. Do not shut your eyes on their virtues, because they adopt different views. Rejoice in the proofs of their piety, coupled though it may be with error. Error is not guilt. Do not blame them for not yielding to your arguments; your judgment may be as fallible as theirs. In a word, esteem them and love them as heartily as if their creed was your own.' If the sermon fails in this generous feeling, let it be condemned. . . . .

"It should be considered, that false doctrines, just so far as they are wide-spread, and deeply rooted, need free and firm resistance. Men through long use grow blind and callous to their inconsistency. Old errors must be placed in new lights and broadly exposed. Such was the principle on which this sermon was written, and we venture to say, that, if any individual would do good, he must adopt this course. Is it said, men thus opposed will be exasperated? We answer, they may be *at first*, but they will learn by degrees to bear with frankness; whilst, if they are accustomed to have their worst opinions treated with deference, they will continue foolishly sensitive to the faintest contradiction. But we repeat, that, the bolder the opposition to opinions, the greater should be the care to avoid personalities. . . . .

"There are good men who will say that it is impossible to make this separation between opinions and those who hold them; that to attack the first is to exasperate the last, and that peace is so great a good as to make it better to leave errors to the power of time than to create controversy. We answer, that truth is a greater good than peace, that we do not despair of the progress of the human mind and virtue, that we know those who differ in views yet who love one another, and that on the whole there is a growing forbearance and moderation amidst the freest discussions. Men who, when treated with respect and kindness, will not allow their opinions to be touched, and resent earnest exposure of their supposed errors as wrong, are alone responsible if controversy is



embittered ; nor must we shut up in our own breasts what we deem great truths, lest some sensitive persons should be wounded."

" *September 19, 1827.*<sup>1</sup> I could have been amused with your account of your conversation with —, had he spared his compliment at the end, — ' You are an honest man.' There is insolence in this concession of honesty to us. These exclusive pretenders to piety seem to think that they confer a great favor by admitting that we are not unprincipled. You performed your part to admiration. When will men who hold great truth feel what they owe to it, and meet the assumptions of others with a righteous confidence? I fear you will think I am somewhat belligerent in my feelings ; but I was never calmer, and should not have thought of religious controversy but for your letter."

Thus bold and strong, and even sternly just, was Dr. Channing in guarding the rights of all seekers of truth. His mildness was free from mawkishness. He treated others, and expected to be treated, with a manly decision. Practically he made the discrimination between opinions and persons which he so constantly urged as a duty. He asked for his errors no tolerance ; he only demanded justice as a man. This frank, straightforward honesty of mind did not contract, but deepened and widened, his liberality. He looked round respectfully and earnestly upon all fellow-inquirers, hoping to gain from them the light for which his whole spirit was longing. This temper of mind may be best illustrated by a few manifestations of it, as given in his letters.

" *Boston, February 26, 1836.*<sup>2</sup> I am not a stranger to your writings. Your Letters on Spain were very interesting to me, and made me desirous to see everything from your pen. I thank you for your testimony to great truths ; for the clear light in which you have placed them ; and, above all, for the ardent and all-sacrificing love of truth, which has given so singular a direction to your life. It would give me great delight to be near you, to learn from your own lips the history of your mind, of your doubts, researches, and illuminations, of your joy in reaching a brighter light, and of your trials, obstacles, discouragements, and sufferings. I trust, I cannot doubt, that you find, in your more spiritual and enlarged views of Christianity, in your more filial views of God, abundant compensations for sufferings. I have wished you would give us, or leave behind you, an autobiography. With what eagerness should I devour such a work ! The progress of every mind is interesting ; but how few minds have travelled such a path as yours ! On one

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To J. Blanco White.

subject, I should be very glad to have the fruits of your observation. We all feel that there is an evil to be deplored in the Christian world far more than doctrinal errors; and that is, the unfaithfulness of Christians to the light which they have attained. We are sometimes almost tempted to say that Christianity is but a name, so little is its power felt. I should like to know among what bodies of Christians there has seemed to you to be the greatest fidelity to their convictions, be these convictions just or not. I should like to know what particular views of our religion have seemed to you to take the strongest hold on the human mind; what causes contribute most to the general unfaithfulness, and what seem to you the most effectual means of resisting them. That the great moral purpose of Christianity is so little answered would be the most painful of all thoughts, had not habit seared us to it."

"*Newport, May 8, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> I show you by my speedy reply how acceptable your letter was to me. Its spirit is indeed encouraging and delightful to me, not for any selfish reasons, not because *I* am included in its liberality, but for its own sake, because it is the spirit of Christianity, and such as man should always cherish toward man. I certainly ought not to suspect myself of taking pleasure in another's candor, because I am sheltered under it, for I have learned to live without experience of candor. I have passed nearly forty years under no small reproach, denunciation, and proscription. I have been deprived, not merely of good name, but of what is far dearer to a Christian, of no small degree of the *moral influence* which I am bound to exert; and yet I have made no angry complaint. Perhaps, in my love of quiet, retired thought, I have not been sensitive enough to the injury done me. I invite no liberality toward myself; but when it is extended to me, I welcome it, especially as I see in it the sign of a better day, of a brighter manifestation of the spirit of our religion. . . . .

"You say that the Unitarians might make 'many concessions' to the Trinitarians. It is true, I might adopt much of the Trinitarian language, not only on the Trinity, but the Atonement. I could say, that Christ died to magnify the law, to satisfy Divine justice, and that God cannot forgive without manifesting his displeasure at sin. But I cannot think with Talleyrand, that the 'use of language is to hide our thoughts.' Such approximations to those from whom we really differ seem to me to put in peril our 'simplicity and godly sincerity.' I know not where they will stop. They

<sup>1</sup> To Professor George Bush, New York.

also obstruct the progress of truth, and to the truth every Christian must be willing to be a martyr. Still more, the usurpation which demands such concessions is a wrong to our common Lord and Master, and to the human mind, which must not be debarred from seeking truth, and giving utterance to its deep convictions. In saying this, I do not speak as a Unitarian, but as an independent Christian. I have little or no interest in Unitarians *as a sect*. I have hardly anything to do with them. I can endure no sectarian bonds. With Dr. Priestley, a good and great man, who had most to do in producing the late Unitarian movement, I have less sympathy than with many of the 'Orthodox.' I shall soon publish a discourse on 'the Church,' which I will send you, and which will show my position in this respect. I would not have you imagine that any sectarian feeling prevents my advances to other sects."

"August 29, 1841.<sup>1</sup> Your religious experience, as you relate it, has been fitted to carry you forward. There are advantages in having known error and felt its power, if we are so happy as to escape from it. We know the truth more distinctly by contrast. We have a wider field for observation and comparison, and, what is of great importance, we can understand the feelings of those from whom we differ, and do them greater justice. I am strongly opposed to Methodism, not for its speculative errors, but for its spirit of domination. No sect seems to me more fettered, or to have more the spirit of a sect. It is a religious aristocracy, combining a great power for narrow ends. As I grow older, I grieve more and more at the impositions on the human mind, at the machinery by which the few keep down the many. I distrust sectarian influence more and more. I am more detached from a denomination, and strive to feel more my connection with the Universal Church, with all good and holy men. I am little of a Unitarian, have little sympathy with the system of Priestley and Belsham, and stand aloof from all but those who strive and pray for clearer light, who look for a purer and more effectual manifestation of Christian truth."

The passage last quoted, breathing as it does the temper of liberality and aspiration, which, characterizing Dr. Channing's youth, had strengthened through his manhood, gave rise to the rumor of his having changed his opinions, — a rumor so absurd, that it would be unworthy even of a passing notice, had not disingenuous theologians systematically perverted the plain meaning of the words, "*I am little of a Unitarian.*" William Ellery Channing was a

<sup>1</sup> To Mr. W. Trevilcock, Carharrack.



member of the Church Universal of the Lovers of God and Lovers of Man. He knew that religion was a *life*, and not a creed or a form. In the spirit of pure, holy goodness, he aspired to be one with the Heavenly Father, — in generous, respectful, overflowing kindness, he purposed to be one with all human brethren. Meanwhile he sought truth, — such views of the Infinite God, of his relations to created spirits, of man's appointed end and rightful aims, as should be in accordance with *reality*. Jesus Christ he welcomed with unlimited reverence and affection, as the full manifestation of what human existence, in communion with the Divine Being, might be and should be. He saw in this "first-born of many brethren" a revelation of a spiritual mystery, whose depth of glory no ages of the past had fathomed. He waited in prayerful confidence for a fuller apprehension of the sublime career opened before mankind. Out of superstition and cant, scepticism and fear, sophistry and selfish strife, he longed to be delivered into "the glorious liberty of the children of God." On sectarianism and theological warfare he looked down with profound disgust and pity, and valued bodies of believers and individual disciples according to the degree in which he saw reflected in them the image of the common Master, who prayed that "all" might be "one." Unitarianism he conscientiously considered an advance towards an unobscured view of the Christian religion. But the thought of resting in a Unitarian creed, or of limiting his sympathies to a Unitarian denomination, never for a moment shadowed his mind. He knew his ignorance, he felt his limitations, too well for any such narrowness. Christendom was to him a living body, forever animated from on high, constantly unfolding, instinct with a spirit of reform, providentially guarded and guided, destined to become a true catholic unity, by means of love embodied in holy characters and humane deeds. He joined hands with the grand circle of the hopeful and devoted "followers of God" who were working together with Him to introduce the kingdom of heaven upon earth. In mere speculative opinions, he was never more decidedly a Unitarian, or, to use his own definition, a believer that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is alone and exclusively the Supreme and Independent God," than in the last year of his life, and on his death-bed; but at no previous period either was he so humbly watching for some influx of the light of life which might renovate the nations. Constitutionally he had a dread of sacrificing independence by too close ties of association; from the whole cast of his philosophy, he was led to attach a superlative value to individuality in character, thought, action; and experience had taught

him to "fear the shackles which a party connection imposed." In a word, he regarded himself "as belonging not to a sect, but to the community of free minds, of lovers of truth, of followers of Christ both on earth and in heaven."<sup>1</sup> In the following passages he has so fully defined his position, that no person of intelligence and candor can misunderstand him.

1827. "It is the influence of the works of God to set our minds free from all bigotry and prejudice. In the presence of nature, I forget the religious and national distinctions which divide mankind, and sympathize with the benevolent Power which sustains all. I feel that I belong, not to a part, but to the whole, — to the universe of God. The creation is a powerful teacher of liberal feelings, and does much to counteract the illiberal preaching which passes for Christianity. After hearing in a church a discourse which makes God a partial being, and identifies him with a sect, I delight to escape into the open air, and one view of the heavens, or of any of the great features of nature, is enough to scatter the gloom which had gathered over me, and to teach me that what has been said, however well intended, is false. God's works confirm his word, — assure me, after all which I have heard, that he is still the universal Father. I have not come, then, from viewing God's works to breathe into you narrowness and bitterness of feeling. I would come in that spirit of universal charity and benignity which befits a pupil of the universe, and still more a disciple of Christ. I aim not to sever you from others; I aim only to give you a just self-respect, a sense of what is due to your own minds, — moral and religious independence, energy of character which will not yield blindly to any external influence, whenever exerted, or however it may strive to wrap itself in a sacred garb. This spirit is not inconsistent with true love, but is its ally and natural associate."

"*Boston, June 2, 1828.*<sup>2</sup> There was one part of your letter which gave me peculiar pleasure, — that in which you speak of the favor which my discourse on the evidences of Christianity has found in England. I pretend not to be indifferent to literary reputation, but I hope I may say that the thought of contributing anything to a more intelligent reception and to more generous views of our religion is dearer to me than any human praise. Your letter gives me reason to think that you accord with me, not, perhaps, in my peculiarities of faith, — for of these you say nothing, — but in the conviction, that Christianity is often injured by narrow and degrad-

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. III. p. 208. One Volume Edition, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.

ing modes of exhibiting it, and that its generous character and ennobling influence are very imperfectly understood. Allow me to say, that I take the more pleasure in making these inferences as to your state of mind, because your sex, with all their merits, — and these are above praise, — have had their full share in fixing the present low standard of religion by the ease with which they have given up their minds to be awed and formed by vulgar and menacing teachers. I do hail the marks of intellectual freedom and moral courage in your sex with peculiar hope; for woman, through her maternal and social influences, must always act on the religion of a community with great power; and if subdued by an illiberal, irrational faith, she will do much to spread the infection around her.

“I speak to you freely, for you have encouraged me to do so, — and the more freely, because, if you agree with me as far as I suppose, I should rejoice to enlist you in what seems to me the greatest cause on earth. Do not imagine that I would draw you into sectarian warfare. I would have you bear your public *testimony* to Christianity, as a religion of benignant aspect, of a liberal spirit, of lofty purposes, given to free and enlarge the intellect, to form a higher order of character, a filial and elevating piety, and an unbounded charity, — and to endue the will with invincible strength in well-doing. I want our religion to be taken out of the hands of technical, professional men, — who look at it through the mists of the dark ages. It is the property, not of priests, but of the human race, and every superior mind may and should do something towards asserting its celestial dignity.”

“*June 16, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> The immense moral power now exerted by France over the civilized world, a power growing from her geographical position, from her political relations, as the centre and spring of the great revolutionary movement in Europe, and from the universality of her language and literature, renders her at this moment the most interesting nation on earth. The cause of free institutions and of human improvement seems specially committed to her. When I take this view of France, I am greatly afflicted by what I hear of the want of religious principle among all classes of the French population; for, without this principle, I see not how a people can rise to any moral greatness, or do much for the human race. I wish to know if the accounts I have heard are true. Is Christianity classed by the great majority of thinking men in that country among exploded impostures? Is religion in

<sup>1</sup> To M. J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi.



all its forms neglected, contemned, and without power? Are those who are alive to its importance — for such there must be — so few and scattered as to exert no influence? Is Voltaire as much an oracle as formerly? I once thought him the truest expression of the French mind. Is he so still? I will not overpower you with questions. But an important one remains. From what means or efforts may a better state of things be hoped in France? What can be done for religion in that country? Your article on religion, translated by Miss Sedgwick, satisfies me that you sympathize with me in my interest in this subject, and I know you must have thought on it seriously. What then, I repeat it, can be done? My remoteness exposes me to many errors; but I have a general conviction that Christianity is not to revive in France in any of its old forms. Catholicism is fallen, and so is Protestantism. In truth, the last was an antagonist to the first, — a belligerent religion, framed to put down Rome, — and so far was a great good. But its work is very much done, nor is it enough adapted to the present wants of the human mind to regain its power. A purer, higher form of Christianity is needed, such as will approve itself, to men of profound thinking and feeling, as the real spring and most efficacious instrument of moral elevation, moral power, and disinterested love. If I may put another question, I would ask if there are any symptoms of this purer religion in France. Is the want of it beginning to be felt? St. Simonianism, as far as I know it, is a political engine, a worldly movement, not the struggling of the moral, religious, and immortal nature for freer action and a new development. The writings of Cousin and Constant give promise of a better state of things. Do they represent any considerable number of the thinking class? Can you name to me any intellectual men interested in this subject, who would like to open a correspondence with me? Can you name any books which would enlighten me? Damiron's view of the French philosophy of the age I have read."

"*Boston, June 29, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> My highly valued friend, Miss Peabody, has read to me your letters, in which you express a wish to know something of the views of Christianity which prevail to a considerable extent in this part of our country, and I am encouraged by your language to hope that you may look with some interest into a volume which I have published, and which will give you the general features of this form of religion. I ought to observe, however, that what is here called Unitarianism, a very inadequate

<sup>1</sup> To M. le Baron Degerando, Paris.

name, is characterized by nothing more than by the spirit of freedom and individuality. It has no established creed or symbol. Its friends think each for himself, and differ much from each other; so that my book, after all, will give you my mind rather than the dogmas of a sect.

"I am particularly gratified by this mode of introduction to you, because it may authorize a request which I have much at heart. There are few things which I desire more than to know with some accuracy the religious condition of France, the tendencies of the thinking part of society and of the mass of the people on this subject, and what are the views of good and intelligent men, as to the best means of increasing the power of religion among you. France, from her geographical and political position, and from the immense moral influence which she is exerting, may be considered as the central power of Europe, and nothing discourages me more than the accounts which I often receive of the absence, the almost total want, of the religious principle among all classes of her population. Are these accounts true? Has France, as a nation, lost sight of man's connection with God, and with a future and higher existence? Is Christianity without honor and without power among you? Are there not signs of the revival of the religious principle? If so, what direction or form is it taking? Is any deep consciousness of the need of it springing up? I know that recent events have absorbed the people, nor ought any striking development of religious feeling to be expected under such circumstances. Still, a tendency to a better state of things, if real and profound, will give some signs of its existence. I wish to propose another question, which I trust you will answer with entire frankness. It is, whether the views of religion given in my volume are in any degree suited to the wants and state of mind of any considerable class in France. . . .

"You see to what object my mind chiefly turns. In the struggle of France for freedom, I have sympathized with her most fervently. But I wish for her a freedom worthy of the name; and this cannot be hoped for, unless it shall ally itself with a pure and rational religion. I will only add, that one part of my volume may not meet your full approbation. I refer to my remarks on Bonaparte. If I know myself, I wrote that article from a sincere interest in the cause of freedom and mankind. I may have erred, however, and if my errors are important enough to be exposed, I will thank any friend of truth to undertake the work."

"*December* 19, 1832.<sup>1</sup> I continue to look towards France with

<sup>1</sup> To M. J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi.

great interest. She must be roused sooner or later from her present indifference to a new action on the subject of religion, and this will have an immense influence on the progress of society. I am not at all discouraged by the failure of attempts to restore the antiquated systems of theology. I neither expect nor desire Christianity to revive in France under its old forms. Something better is needed. Christianity, I conceive, is to be re-established by clear developments of its original, essential truths. One of the great means of restoring it is, to disconnect it from its old forms, to break up the habit, almost universal in France, of identifying it with Catholicism and old Protestantism. Another means is, to show its harmony with the spirit of freedom, of philanthropy, of progress, and to show that these principles require, in order to their full expansion, the aid of Christianity. The identity of this religion with the most unconfined and self-sacrificing benevolence needs especially to be understood. No religion can now prevail which is not plainly seen to minister to our noblest sentiments and powers, and unless Christianity fulfils this condition, I cannot wish it success.

“With these views, I do not altogether acquiesce in what you think the duty of the friends of enlightened religion at the present moment. You think they must *wait*. If you mean that the time has not come for them to organize themselves into a new sect, I shall not differ from you. I doubt whether that time will ever come. I doubt whether the purified Christianity which I anticipate is to rise in the form of a sect or party, whether its friends are to distinguish themselves by any outward badge, or whether it is to make its way by the imposing efforts of masses. The age of symbols, of pompous worship, of the priesthood, and of overpowering religious combinations, is passing away. Religion must be spread more and more by rational means, that is, by the unfettered efforts of individual minds, by clear development of great truths, by moral suasion, and by examples of its sublime efficacy on the character and life. These means are always seasonable, and were never more needed than now. I expect, indeed, that they who receive this higher manifestation of Christianity will be attracted to each other, and will unite their exertions as far as consists with perfect intellectual freedom. But their enlarged views and sympathies, and their reverence for the religion, will make them shrink from giving it a sectarian form.”

“*Boston, September 11, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> I owe you many thanks for the volume you so kindly sent me of the Liverpool Lectures. I had

<sup>1</sup> To the Rev. J. H. Thom, Liverpool.



read a good part of the Lectures, but was glad to read the rest, and to own all. I have expressed to my English friends my admiration of these defences of the truth. I do not know how the cause could have fallen into better hands, or could have been more worthily maintained. Indeed, I ought to go farther, — I doubt whether the battle could have been fought as well elsewhere. . . . They will lead a certain number to think, and will give them far higher views than they had before. They will stir up thought. They are suggesting, quickening, fertilizing, — and such are the writings which are to do good, not those which produce immediate superficial effect.

“I was glad that you did not undertake to defend any Unitarianism but your own. I know that in this way the benefit of authority is lost, and the unity of the sect is threatened; but what unity is of any worth, except the attraction subsisting among those who hold, not nominally, but really, not in words, but with profound conviction and love, the same great truths? I see in these Lectures the signs of a freer discussion than we have had yet. As yet, controversialists who have broken all other chains have had a feeling of allegiance to their sect. Pure, supreme love of truth, how hard an acquisition! Perhaps our attachment to Christianity may sometimes blind us, by leading us to force meanings on its records which fall below the dignity of a revelation. It is no easy thing to let the records speak for themselves, to take them as we find them, to let them say what will injure their authority in the present state of men’s minds. We ‘rational Christians’ are in danger of acting the part of their patrons, rather than their interpreters.

“There is another danger, too, to which we are exposed. We are more and more, and very properly, inclined to rest Christianity on the character, the spirit, the divine elevation of Jesus Christ; and the tendency of this is to beget a swollen way of speaking about him and his virtues, very inconsistent with the simple beauty and majesty of his character, and which is fitted to throw a glare over him, and not to present that distinct apprehension of him so necessary to a quickening and transforming love. It is an age of swelling words. I must plead guilty myself, and I am not sure that the Lectures are free from the offence. Indeed, to see and set forth Christianity in its simplicity is a hard task. Brought up as we have been, living in a most artificial, unchristian state of society, — the antithesis of the kingdom of heaven, — it is not easy to preserve and feel the force of any precept or truth of the religion. We must, by one or another means, escape the world we live in, — its hollow religious conventionalisms, its denial throughout of the

worth of a human spirit, of the fraternal relation of all human beings, — before we can get a glimpse of the truth as it is in Jesus.”

“*June 22, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> I can touch but on one topic more. You speak of your brother James. Since writing to you, I have read all his Lectures; and they seem to me among the noblest efforts of our times. They have quickened and instructed me. Indeed, his Lectures and Mr. Thom’s give me new hope for the cause of truth in England. Not that I expect any great immediate effect; but noble spiritual action in a few is an augury of good which cannot fail. I differ, as I think I told you, from some of your brother’s expositions; but no matter; I do not enjoy his mind the less.”

“*September 10, 1841.*<sup>2</sup> Old Unitarianism must undergo important modification or developments. Thus I have felt for years. Though an advance on previous systems, and bearing some better fruits, it does not work deeply, it does not strike living springs in the soul. This is perfectly consistent with the profound piety of individuals of the body. But it cannot quicken and regenerate the world. No matter how reasonable it may be, if it is without *power*. Its history is singular. It began as a protest against the rejection of reason, — against mental slavery. It pledged itself to progress, as its life and end; but it has gradually grown stationary, and now we have a *Unitarian Orthodoxy*. Perhaps this is not to be wondered at or deplored, for all reforming bodies seem doomed to stop, in order to keep the ground, much or little, which they have gained. They become conservative, and out of them must spring new reformers, to be persecuted generally by the old. With these views, I watch all new movements with great interest.”

“*Boston, November, 1841.*<sup>3</sup> That further inquiry will lead you to think as I do, I am by no means sure; but that it will modify your traditional belief, and give you clearer, more quickening views of Christianity, I cannot doubt. I seem to myself to be free from sectarian biases. That any existing sect should put down all others would be but a secondary good. What I feel is, that Christianity, as expounded by all our sects, is accomplishing its divine purpose most imperfectly, and that we want a reformation worthy of the name; that, instead of enslaving ourselves to any existing sect, we should seek, by a new cleansing of our hearts, and more earnestness of prayer; brighter, purer, more quickening views of Christianity.

“I value Unitarianism, not because I regard it as in itself a perfect system, but as freed from many great and pernicious errors

<sup>1</sup> To Miss H. Martineau.

<sup>3</sup> To Mr. Harland Coultas, Malton.

<sup>2</sup> To the Rev. James Martineau, Liverpool.

of the older systems, as encouraging freedom of thought, as raising us above the despotism of the church, and as breathing a mild and tolerant spirit into all the members of the Christian body. Methodism seems to me to have done much good; but I apprehend its day is drawing to a close. It is a system of ecclesiastical oppression. The concentration of power in the Conference is intolerable, and I see not how any free spirit can brook it. We are to be Christ's freemen, not instruments in the hands of our fellow-creatures. I owe so much to spiritual, Christian liberty myself, that I mourn over every infraction of it, and earnestly desire to secure it to all my Christian brethren.

"I wish you the best blessings from on high, the 'Spirit of Truth,' growing light, and growing love."

Thus does it appear how truly Dr. Channing said of himself, "I desire to escape the narrow walls of a particular church, and to live under the open sky, in the broad light, looking far and wide, seeing with my own eyes, hearing with my own ears, and following truth meekly, but resolutely, however arduous or solitary be the path in which she leads."<sup>1</sup> To him there was "one church grander than all particular ones, however extensive, — spread over all lands, and one with the church in heaven, . . . the family of the pure in all worlds, . . . the innumerable multitude of the holy everywhere." With this church he felt bound by "vital, everlasting connection," and regarded himself as "a member of a vast spiritual community, as joint heir and fellow-worshipper with the goodly company of Christian heroes who have gone before."<sup>2</sup> The grand "heresy" to him was the substitution of anything, "whether creed, or form, or church, for the *goodness* which is essentially, everlastingly, by its own nature, lovely, glorious, divine, . . . which is the sun of the spiritual universe, . . . which is God himself dwelling in the human soul." Growth in goodness was what he longed for throughout Christendom.

Let us now briefly describe the work, wherein, as we have seen, Dr. Channing so earnestly hoped to embody, with some degree of organic symmetry, the truths which, through long years, he had been assimilating. It was to have borne the title, apparently, of "The Principles of Moral, Religious, and Political Science"; and the following extracts from a first draft of the Introduction will show the author's stand-point.

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. III. p. 211. One Volume Edition, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. VI. pp. 203, 205, 208, 223, 224. One Volume Edition, pp. 435-437, 443, 444.



“In a work devoted to the exposition of moral, religious, and political truth, a minute description of all the principles and powers of human nature will not be expected. Volumes would be needed for the fit discussion of such a topic. The TRUE PERFECTION of man is the great idea of the moral sciences. His nature is therefore to be examined so as to determine its central law, and the end for which all religious and political institutions should be established; it is to be studied for the purpose of ascertaining its true proportions, its highest powers, the relations of its affections and faculties to each other, its ruling principles.

“In every department of nature we discern differences and varieties. The universe is not a monotonous repetition of one form of being. Each single object is composed of a variety of parts; each sustains various relations, exercises various functions, is receptive of various influences. Nor are all parts of equal importance; some are prominent, others subordinate; some essential, others accidental; some are ends, and others means. The same properties, also, are developed in an infinite variety of degrees. As each color presents an indefinite number of shades, so each power of living creatures is manifested with a like diversity of intenseness. In beings of the same class are found all possible differences in the degrees of their correspondence to the standard or type of the class. Thus nature everywhere reveals Variety, Difference, Relation, Degrees, Order, Perfection.

“That Human Nature should present to us a similar variety is to be expected from the analogies which are seen to pervade the universe. Man is not a single power, but a wonderful diversity of properties are combined in his constitution. The laws which control the material world are in him conjoined with the energies of mind. That his various organs, faculties, functions, differ in importance, — that some are ends, while others are means, — that some are supreme and others subordinate, — that there is an Order or Harmony of powers in which consists the perfection of the human being, — may be confidently inferred from the laws of variety, degrees, order, which govern the universe. . . .

“All our inquiries in morals, religion, and politics must begin with human nature. The ends for which a being is made, his relations, his true course of conduct, depend upon his nature. To comprehend the former, we must understand the latter. Accordingly, certain views of man are involved in all speculations about the objects of life, and the proper sphere of human action. On such views all schemes of society and legislation are built. Every great statesman, every reformer who has introduced a revolution in the

affairs of nations, has been impelled and guided by his estimate of man. It is the want of a true science of our nature, that has vitiated all past systems of government, morals, and religion. No book can be written wisely, no plan wisely formed for the improvement of mankind, which has not its origin in just reverence of the powers of the human spirit. And not only is it true, that morals, religion, and politics, in their application to masses of men, must have their foundation in certain views of human nature; but every individual's principles, his whole system of duty, will take its character from the light in which he regards himself and his race. All the relations of life will wear different aspects to men who interpret differently the beings by whom they are sustained.

“Just views of human nature are, then, all-important. In comprehending man, we comprehend God, Duty, Life, Death, Providence; we have the key to the Divine administration of the world. In proportion as man is made known to us, we learn why he was placed upon earth, and see the explanation of the discipline which is appointed to him here. The mysteries of his childhood, progress, and maturity, of his joys and sorrows, of his temptations and sins, gradually clear away. Even material nature becomes revealed to us in a new light. In proportion as we understand man, — God's greatest work, — we understand inferior creation; we discover new adaptations of the outward and the inward worlds, new analogies between nature and the human spirit; the Unity of the Universe dawns upon us.”

Eight chapters only of the First Part of this work — which, in accordance with the preceding remarks, was devoted to an analytic and synthetic view of human nature — were composed. The order of their arrangement and their titles are as follows: — I. Sensation; II. Idea of Matter; III. Idea of the I or Self; IV. External Perception; V. Internal Perception; VI. Conception; VII. Memory; VIII. Discernment of Relations. The plan of the author was plainly to trace, by ascending degrees, the Order, Proportion, Harmony, of man's powers; and thus, by proceeding inward, from functions and relations which are most superficial and accidental, to those which are most central and essential, to exhibit an ideal of a perfect human being. It is scarcely necessary to inform a reader of Dr. Channing's writings, that he recognized as the supreme power in man the Conscience; and that he saw in this primal spring of moral energy an authoritative manifestation of absolute right, justly entitling it to be called the Oracle of God. Morality, in his view, flowed out from, and ascended up to,

religion; the finite will was forever newly animated from the Infinite Will; and goodness was the inspiration of the All-Good.

Thus from Man, the author would have been led to speak, in the Second Part of his work, of God, whom he saw revealed in human nature and the universe, as the One, Eternal, Infinite Person, whose essence and energy are love,—the Heavenly Father, who creates all spirits in his own image, and continually re-creates them by his inflowing life. Man he considered as actually a child of God, in exact proportion to the degree of the fulness and constancy of his communion with the Father of Spirits. The process of a progressive life he believed to be a perpetual regeneration. The end of man's destiny, to which he should aspire, was oneness with the Eternal Being; and in Jesus Christ—whatever his rank in creation, and whatever his previous modes of existence—he saw with grateful trust, and all-animating hope, a manifestation of the glory to which man individually and collectively is welcomed.

Having thus, in the central portion of his book, presented the perfection of human nature in its unity with its Divine Being, as a reality, Dr. Channing would have passed in the Third Part to announce the laws of duty, personal and social, which necessarily proceed from the principles which he had established. In ethics and politics, as in religion, his leading aim was the spiritualization of man through the practical embodiment of Divine charity, in every relation of domestic, industrial, commercial, national life. He was assured that the law of love could be applied at once to the most comprehensive and most minute concerns of human intercourse. He anticipated, with unfaltering faith, the coming of an era of Universal Brotherhood, when freedom and order would be perfectly harmonized, and when mankind the earth round would be united in one co-operative family of the children of God.

Dr. Channing has been misapprehended alike by his admirers and critics, through the supposition, that he assumed to teach a much more definite system than he ever considered himself as having attained to. He left many views aside which others earnestly advocated, not because he *denied* them, but because he could not *verify* them. He had early learned to discriminate between truths and conjectures, and he was as conscientiously strict in his statement of the former, as he was unrestrainedly free in speculating upon the latter. His soul was illuminated with the idea of the absolute, immutable glory of Moral Good; and reverence for conscience is the key to his whole doctrine of human destiny and duty. Many difficult metaphysical points he passed wholly by, as being out of the sphere alike of intuition and of experience, and



in relation to them was willing to confess his ignorance. He believed, to be sure, in the possibility of man's gaining some insight of Universal Order, and respected the lofty aspiration which prompts men to seek a perfect knowledge of the Divine Laws; but he considered pretensions to Absolute Science as quite premature, saw more boastfulness than wisdom in ancient and modern schemes of philosophy, and was not a little amused at the complacent confidence with which quite evidently fallible theorists assumed to stand at the centre, and to scan and depict the panorama of existence. For himself, he was content to wait.

Much of his correspondence is interesting, however, as revealing his habits of thought and inquiry, and enabling us to recognize his cherished views in relation to Man, the Divine Being, and Christianity. With extracts, therefore, from his letters upon theological and philosophical subjects, this chapter shall be closed.

“*November 29, 1828.*<sup>1</sup> I have read the book<sup>2</sup> you sent me with much interest. The phrenological part, I fear, did me little good. I have a strong aversion to theories which subject the mind to the body; and, believing this to be the effect of phrenology, I have not felt the obligation to study it, and, to say the truth, I am very ignorant of it. I have been instructed by your views of the laws of our nature, and of the connection between our obedience to them and our happiness. I respond joyfully to the hope you express of the progress of the human race, though I do not expect that any improvements of the race will exempt the individual from the necessity of struggle and self-denial in the formation of his own character, or will in any way do for him what every free being *must* do for himself. I was particularly gratified by the earnestness with which you insist on the supremacy of the moral faculties, and point out the inevitable miseries which society is to endure until this fundamental principle be recognized by the individual and the community.

“I send you a discourse recently published by me. You say, you are not of my persuasion. I hope this discourse, with all its defects, will show that I am devoted to no party, but that I would promote, to the extent of my power, the cause of our common Christianity, and of the human race.

“I am, with great regard, your friend.”

“*Boston, March 6, 1829.*<sup>3</sup> The idea of death, as separating us from the outward universe, and shutting us up in our own minds,

<sup>1</sup> To George Combe, Esq., Edinburgh.

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of Man.

<sup>3</sup> To Miss Ruth P. Olney.

seems to me quite the reverse of the truth. Revelation speaks very distinctly of another organization which we are to receive hereafter, and which I consider as a means of communication with all God's works. This doctrine seems to me very rational. \*There is a progression in every part of nature, and to suppose the mind to emerge from its present connection with gross matter to a purely spiritual existence is to imagine a violent transition, quite irreconcilable with this great principle. Death is not to separate the mind from matter, but, in the case of the virtuous, is to raise it from its present subjection to matter to a glorious triumph over it. I confess, I cannot think without depression of breaking all my ties to the material universe. When I think of its infinite extent, of the countless worlds which astronomy discloses to me, I feel that material nature, including all the beings connected with it, must offer infinite food for the mind, unbounded and inexhaustible discoveries of God. Then I find that, just as fast as my mind unfolds, my delight in the universe increases; new correspondences are revealed between the inward and the outward world; a diviner light beams from the creation; a more thrilling voice comes from it. I cannot endure the thought of being severed from this harmonious and glorious universe. I expect death to multiply my connections with it, and to enlarge my knowledge of and power over it.

"Your friend would limit us to purely moral pleasures after death. Why so? One of the great excellences of moral good is, that it aids us to enjoy all other good. The most perfect man is not he who confines himself to purely moral gratifications, but he who has a moral energy through which all things are received and enjoyed by him in a wise order and in just proportions. Other gratifications, thus controlled, become moral. In another world, our pleasures are to be diversified and multiplied. The outward creation — if on such a subject I may be allowed to speculate — will minister an increasing variety of exquisite sensations, of which sight and hearing are but types."

"*Portsmouth, R. I., July 25, 1829.*<sup>1</sup> You want, you say, a better body. Our comfort is, that, in wearing out this body in well-doing, we are earning a better one; and perhaps the agency of the mind and of our present life in determining the future frame is greater than we imagine."

"*St. Croix, W. I., February 6, 1831.*<sup>2</sup> I believe in this divine principle, this ray of divine light, in the soul. But instead of thinking it a *foreign* aid, I regard it as the very essence of the

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss Emily Taylor.

soul, the central principle of our nature, — so central, deep, and ineradicable, that all the appetites and passions are comparatively superficial. To bring the child to a consciousness of the divinity within him seems to me the highest office which parents and teachers can perform. He should be led to understand and feel that his moral nature — the principle which speaks of duty, which discerns the obligations of virtue, which carries in itself the presentiment of a moral government of the universe — is the voice of God, a light from heaven, an infinite germ, a power given him for endless development, and under which our whole nature is to be unfolded in health and beauty. I consider the knowledge of God as important, chiefly as it shows his intimate connection and constant communication with the soul, and thus awakens in us the consciousness of Divine relationship, of being formed for perpetual approach to God in his highest attributes. I consider Christianity as built upon and adapted to these views of human nature. Without the divine principle of which I have spoken, I can see no ground of accountableness, no capacity of religion, no need of the gospel. To give this principle the victory over sin and all hostile influences is the very purpose of our religion. ‘This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’ Here we learn the true salvation and happiness achieved by faith.”

“*St. Croix, April 11, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> I refer to your outlines of moral philosophy. Your opinions on this point of science seem to me very valuable. With many of them I entirely accord. That our physical nature has been too much overlooked by those who have treated it, I fully agree. That its end and means have been very imperfectly understood is equally true. It is my hope to do something in this field; and I should undoubtedly differ from you in some important particulars. You would place me among the ‘abstract’ authors who do not study and teach human nature ‘practically,’ and very possibly you would censure me with some reason. I earnestly wish that you would supply the defect by executing your own plan. You doubt your ability; but the conception of it shows that you have no reason for fear. . . . The success of your ‘Constitution of Man’ in our country has been such as must gratify and reward you. It has found general favor. The Swedenborgians (who, in fact, republished it) are particularly interested in it, — why, I know not, for I read few of their books. I have heard of high commendation of it from a distinguished Calvinistic divine; and as to the more liberal class, they have highly approved

<sup>1</sup> To George Combe, Esq.



and recommended it. Some of its doctrines have found their way into the pulpit. I have met on this island a lady from America, of much distinction in the fashionable world, who had brought it with her as a text-book, and lent it very freely to the intelligent here. She tells me that a gentleman of Philadelphia bought fifty or a hundred copies of it—all he could find—for distribution, believing that he could not do more good. The common remark is, however, that the book is excellent in spite of its phrenology.”

“*St. Croix, W. I., April 24, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> I received some time ago your aphorisms, entitled ‘The New Era of Christianity,’ and I hope you will not consider my delaying to answer your letter as any evidence of indifference to its object. It gives me great satisfaction to find men waking up anywhere to the present degraded state of Christianity, and thirsting and hoping for a purer form of it. I was the more interested in your communication from the circumstance of having read with great pleasure, and I hope profit, your dissertations on Methodism or Evangelical Religion, and on the Spirit of Christianity. I met with these accidentally, and sent for them to England, and have circulated them among my intelligent friends. I find much in your aphorisms to approve, and perhaps my objections, were I to make any, would apply to what I think their defects rather than to positive errors.

“I could wish that the *moral perfection*, which is the great aim of Christianity and the ultimate design of human existence, might be set forth in a more enlarged and exciting form. I could wish that the parental character of God might be taught more as a *moral relation* founded on the affinity of the Divine with the human mind, and having for its end the elevation of the latter to greater and ever-increasing likeness to the former. I would have men taught that Jesus Christ has no other or greater good to give than the improvement of the human soul, than the communication of *his own virtue*, that goodness is essentially one and the same thing with heaven, and that every other good separated from this is delusive and worthless. One of the important evidences of Christianity, as yet hardly touched upon, should occupy a new place in the teaching by which the ‘New Era’ is to be introduced. The virtue which Christianity inculcates, and which was embodied in Christ, should be proved, as it has not been, to be or to constitute the *perfection of human nature*, or to involve the vigorous, harmonious, beneficent action of all its powers and affections. This adaptation of the religion to our spiritual nature, to its development, life, energy, peace,

<sup>1</sup> To William Burns, Esq., Saltcoats, Scotland.

health, and perpetual growth, — this fitness and power of Christianity to connect us by endearing and generous bonds with God, and his whole rational offspring, so that we shall receive most and communicate most, or become living members of the ‘whole family of heaven and earth,’ — this, I think, is an evidence of the divine origin of our religion, particularly suited to its more advanced stages, and suited to give man the conviction so much needed, that Christian virtue is the supreme good to be sought, first for themselves and then for their race. . . .

“Very truly, your friend.”

“*Rhode Island, August 29, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> If it will afford you any satisfaction, I ought to say that my views on the doctrine which you have examined were much the same with yours. At the same time I would add, that for years I have felt a decreased interest in settling the precise rank of Jesus Christ. The power of his character seems to me to lie in his spotless purity, his *moral perfection*, and not in the time during which he has existed. I have attached less importance to this point, from having learned that *all minds* are of *one family*, that the human and the angelic nature are essentially one. Holding this doctrine, I am not shocked as many are by the Humanitarian system. Still, it seems to me to labor under serious objections; nor am I at all influenced by the argument which its disciples insist upon so earnestly, that it brings Jesus nearer to us. His moral perfection seems to me his great peculiarity and separation from all human beings, and this remains the same on all systems, and is more inexplicable on the Humanitarian system than on any other.”

“*Boston, March 30, 1832.*<sup>2</sup> I suppose that my desire to express strongly the intimate connection between man and God leads me sometimes to use a mystical language, which seems to imply that I confound these beings. No one, however, can be less inclined to this form of mysticism than myself. I have friends who lean to Pantheism, with whom I often contend for our individual, distinct existence, and who would quite enjoy your misapprehension of my views. It seems that I ‘spoke of the soul as divine,’ by which I must have meant to express the affinity of its spiritual powers with the Divine nature, — to express particularly its capacity of sympathy with the moral perfections of God, of conforming itself to them without limit or end. This correspondence of the soul to God, this tendency to him, this sensibility to the good, the great, and the infinite, this principle of virtue or inward law, impelling to

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss Emily Taylor.

unbounded progress, I consider as the very *essence* of human nature, needing aid and culture, but still belonging to every soul, whilst —, if I understand him, regards it as a *foreign* principle, something *added* to the mind by a mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit. I believe as much as your friend in the Divine influence. This surrounds us like the atmosphere. With an ineffable love to the soul, which God has made in his own image, he ministers to it, through the universe, through outward nature, society, providence, success, adversity, &c., and, still more, he communes with it, and acts in it *immediately*, but always according to its free and high nature, not to give it new elements, but to cherish and expand its original and infinite capacities, by furnishing objects and incitements to their appropriate action."

"*Boston, April 4, 1837.* I feel that among Liberal Christians the preaching has been too vague, has wanted unity, has scattered attention too much. In my own labors there has been more unity, perhaps in consequence of the strong hold which one sublime idea has taken of my mind. This is, the greatness of the soul, its divinity, its union with God, — not by passive dependence, but by spiritual likeness, — its receptiveness of his spirit, its self-forming power, its destination to ineffable glory, its immortality. This great view binds together all other truth. I think of God as the Father and Inspirer of the soul, of Christ as its redeemer and model, of Christianity as given to enlighten, perfect, and glorify it, of the universe as its school, nutriment, teacher, of all outward beauty as its emblem, of life as appointed for its discipline, and death for its passage to a higher being, of heaven as its perfection, of hell as its ruin. I understand the love which passeth knowledge, when I consider that God looks, as none other can do, into the soul, and comprehends its greatness, perils, and destiny. Love to God seems to me to be founded not on his outward benefits, but on regard to him as the Father of the spirit, present to it, dwelling in it, calling it by conscience and by his providence to perfection, to himself. Love to man has no foundation but in the comprehension of his spiritual nature, and of his spiritual connection with God. To awaken men to what is within them, to help them to understand the infinite treasure of their own souls, — such seems to me the object which is ever to be kept in sight. This is an entirely different thing from filling their heads with vague notions about human dignity. What we want is, to awaken in them a consciousness of their own nature, and of the intimate relation which it establishes between them and God, and to rouse their whole energy to the work of their own redemption and perfection. A sense of respon-



sibleness, thus formed, will be at once most rational and quickening. It is very possible that I have been too exclusive in my views, and I have not given this account of myself for your blind imitation. I feel, however, that preaching which is to do good must have its great idea. Christianity undoubtedly has such an idea. This will be revealed to different minds under a variety corresponding to their various peculiarities. It will not produce monotony. Each man will be himself and no other."

"*Boston, November 20, 1839.*<sup>1</sup> I cannot agree with every part of your letter. You seem to me to make religion too exclusively a product of the reason, and carry your jealousy of the imagination too far, though such jealousy is most natural in one bred to Catholicism. If imagination had no office but to give material forms to God and heaven, I should agree with you; but is it not the function of this glorious faculty to see in the universe a type of the Divinity, in the sun a shadow of his glory, in the beautiful, sublime, and awful forms of nature the signs of spiritual beauty and power? Is not the imagination the principle which tends to the Ideal, which rises above the finite and existent, which conceives of the Perfect, of what eye hath not seen or ear heard? I suppose we differ chiefly in words. I consider religion, however, as founded in the joint operation of all our powers, as revealed by the reason, the imagination, and the moral sentiments. I think, too, you speak too disparagingly of historical Christianity, though here, also, I may misapprehend you. To me, the history of Christianity in the Gospels is inestimable. The life, spirit, works, and character of Jesus Christ are to me the brightest revelations of his truth. I know no histories to be compared with the Gospels in marks of truth, in pregnancy of meaning, in quickening power. I attach great importance to the miracles. They have a vital union with the religion, are full of it, and marvellously adapted to it. They are not anomalous, arbitrary events. I have no faith in abstract, insulated, purposeless miracles, which, indeed, are morally impossible; but the miracles of Christ belong to him, complete the manifestation of him, are in harmony with his truth, and at once give to it, and receive from it, confirmation. I should pay little heed to a narrative, from ever so many hands, of the resurrection of a low-minded man, who had died for no end, and had risen, according to the story, to lead as low a life as before. But the *resurrection of Christ*, related as it is to his character and religion, taught and sealed with blood by the grand reformers of the race,

<sup>1</sup> To J. Blanco White.

and recorded as it is in the Gospels, is a fact which comes to me with a certainty which I find in few ancient histories. The evidence of such miracles as accompanied Christianity seems to me precisely suited to the moral wants of men in present and past times, that is, to a stage where the moral development is sufficient to discern more or less of divinity in Christian truth, but not sufficient to produce full, earnest faith. I need miracles less now than formerly. But could I have got where I am, had not miracles entered into the past history of the world?

“Another topic about which I may have misapprehended you is *supernaturalism*. I doubt if I know what you mean by it; but I have not room to write about it. I will only say, that I have no sympathy with those who disparage *the natural*. Nature, in its broad sense, as meaning the created universe, with its order and law, becomes more and more sacred, divine, in my sight. But a letter would not hold what I might say here. Your true meaning I should like to get.”

“*Boston, November 29, 1839.*<sup>1</sup> The part of your discourse which gave me the sincerest delight, and for which I would especially thank you, is that in which you protest against the doctrine of philosophical necessity. Nothing for a long time has given me so much pleasure. I have felt that that doctrine, with its natural connections, was a millstone round the neck of Unitarianism in England. I know no one who has so clearly and strongly pointed out as yourself its inconsistency with moral sentiments in God, and with the exercise of moral sentiments towards him by his creatures. I have always lamented that Dr. Priestley’s authority had fastened this doctrine on his followers.

“—— has spoken of me as using *patronizing* language towards Dr. Priestley. I must be strangely wanting in humility, if I did not feel my great inferiority to that extraordinary man, or if I could think of him as needing my patronage. The truth is, that I could never speak of him without qualification, in consequence of my deep conviction of injury done to the cause of truth by his speculations on the moral nature of man, reaching, as they must do, to the moral nature of God.”

“*Boston, November 2, 1840.* If ever a being understood himself, it was Jesus Christ. He was entirely free from the self-partiality by which men are so often blinded to their destiny. His profound humility must have guarded him from all extravagance of conception and hope. His clear, bright perceptions of the Divinity

<sup>1</sup> To the Rev. James Martineau.

and of human duty and perfection were signs of consummate wisdom, of an unclouded reason, of a sound, healthful mind. He was nothing of an enthusiast in the common sense of the word, — no dreamer. There was no passion in his views of life, of the evils he was to overcome, of the good he was to accomplish. He was calm, authoritative, self-possessed, singularly just in his appreciation of men and things, and had always the tone of a man dealing with realities. I cannot explain his sublime yet calm consciousness of his end and destiny, — the wonderful grandeur, and, at the same time, the simplicity and naturalness, with which he expressed it, — the serene assurance with which he looked forward to his death, and to the triumph of his cause in future ages, under the humble ministry of his disciples, — by anything but the admission of the truth of his convictions.

“This conception of the Christ was his own, — so remote from that of his nation, that it could not have been borrowed. Undoubtedly, there were Jews who looked forward to a moral change under the Messiah; but he was to extend religion under the form of Judaism, to spread the law of Moses, and Judea was to sit on the throne of the world. The idea of a purely spiritual reign, the chief ministers of which were to be the last and least, and servants of all men, — to be persecuted, martyred, — was, as I conceive, altogether his own, and wholly inexplicable by outward influences. Above all, the idea that this kingdom was to rise on the ruins of Judea and all Jewish hope, shows the entire separation of Christ’s mind from all around him.”

“*Newport, June 21, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> I have seen more of the Philadelphia Quakers, and love them much; but, as a people, they have lost their first life. Rules, usages, and discipline have taken place of the spirit. My Quaker library has been increased by the journals of Elias Hicks, David Wheeler, and John Woolman. Have you read Woolman? I was so affected by his journal, two or three years ago, that I began a review of it, and went a good way, but was drawn aside by other objects. A Quaker lady told me, that Charles Lamb used to say that ‘Woolman drew tears from his eyes.’ In his exquisite essay on Quaker Meetings he says, ‘Get the writings of John Woolman by heart.’

“I have read this last week, with inexpressible delight, Nichol’s ‘Architecture of the Heavens.’ How it lifts one above the earth, and makes him free of the universe! What a wonderful being is man, who, from such slight hints, can construct the universe! How

<sup>1</sup> To Miss E. P. Peabody.



paltry seem the strifes of the world after this journey through creation! Should we explore this creation with such joy, were it not to be our everlasting inheritance?

“As to our friend Theodore Parker, he deals too much in exaggerations. He makes truth unnecessarily repulsive, and, as I think, sometimes goes beyond the truth. I shall judge for myself of his discourse.<sup>1</sup> Current opinions do not weigh a feather in such a case. Send me the sermon as soon as it is published. . . . I infer from your letter that you are somewhat excited about the controversy in Boston. Possess your soul in patience. Let not rude attacks on any disturb you. Yours faithfully.”

“*Newport, July 6, 1841.*<sup>2</sup> I thank you for Mr. Parker’s sermon, and request you to thank him for the copy he sent me. You will wish to know my opinion; and, though I cannot go into the subject, I feel that I ought to send a line.

“The great idea of the discourse, the immutableness of Christian truth, I respond to entirely. I have labored to separate the notion of arbitrariness, positiveness, from men’s notions of Christianity. That this religion is universal, eternal truth, the expression of the Divine mind, and corresponding to the Divine principles in human nature, is what I feel, perhaps, as deeply as any; and I was moved by Parker’s strong, heart-felt utterance of it. Still, there was a good deal in the discourse I did not respond to. I grieved that he did not give some clear, direct expression of his belief in the Christian miracles. His silence under such circumstances makes me fear that he does not believe them. I see not how the rejection of these can be separated from the rejection of Jesus Christ. Without them he becomes a mere fable, for nothing is plainer than that, from the beginning, miracles constituted his history. There is not a trace of a time when he existed in men’s minds without them. His resurrection was always the essential grand fact in men’s impressions of him, — at least as distinctly recognized as his crucifixion. Miracles enter into all his conceptions of himself, as these have been handed down to us. They are so inwoven into all his teachings and acts, that in taking them away we have next to nothing left.

“Without miracles, the historical Christ is gone. No such being is left us; and in losing him how much is lost! Reduce Christianity to a set of abstract ideas, sever it from its teacher, and it ceases to be the ‘power of God unto salvation.’ Allow that it could give us

<sup>1</sup> Discourse on the Transient and Permanent in Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss E. P. Peabody.

the idea of perfection, — which I cannot concede, — what I want is, not the naked idea, but the existence, the realization, of perfection. Some seem to think that the *idea* of infinite perfection answers all the purposes of a God. But no; the *existence* of this perfection is the ground of my hope, my happiness, and so I want the *existence* of human perfection. Christian truth coming to me from the living soul of Jesus, with his living faith and love, and brought out in his grand and beautiful life, is a very, very different thing from an abstract system. The more I know of Jesus, the less I can spare him; and this place which he fills in my heart, the quickening office which his character performs, is to me no mean proof of his reality and his superhuman greatness.

“In regard to *miracles*, I never had the least difficulty. The *grand miracle*, as often has been said, is the *perfect, divine character* of Christ; and to such a being a miraculous mode of manifestation seems *natural*. It is by no figure of speech that I call Christ miraculous. He was more separate from other men than his acts from other acts. He was the sinless, spotless Son of God, distinguished from all men by that infinite peculiarity, freedom from moral evil. He was the *Perfect Image* of God, the perfection of the spiritual nature. Is it not plain that such a being must have been formed under discipline and influences distinct from those of all other men? that he cannot be explained by the laws under which we live? that he is thus a moral miracle, though not such as implies any compulsory influence? To such a being, the miracles of Christ's history wonderfully agree. The outward and the inward correspond in God's system. God reveals himself to us by outward, material types. So his Son is revealed. What beautiful types of Christ's moral, healing, quickening power we have in the miraculous parts of his history! I feel, as I read them, that the conception of such a character as Christ, and the unfolding of it in such harmonious acts or operations, transcended human power, especially in that low moral age, and that nothing but the truth of the history, nothing but the actual manifestation of such a being in such forms, can explain or account for the Gospel narratives.

“Mr. Parker supposes Christ's truth to have been revealed to him by his moral perfection. I will not stop to examine this, but will only say, that the men to whom Christ was to unfold this truth were unspeakably distant from this perfection, — that they were low, gross, spiritually dead, — that the spiritual evidence which was enough for him hardly gleamed on their darkened understandings. How needed was some outward, visible symbol of the truth to such minds! How did they need that the great spiritual Deliverer should

be first made known to them by merciful, majestic acts of outward deliverance! Even the more spiritual men of that time, who had longings for immortality, were exceedingly assisted in their earthly state of mind by Christ's resurrection. It shows great ignorance of human nature, and of God's modes of operation, to suppose that he would approach a darkened, sensual world by purely spiritual, abstract teaching.

"As to Christ's *authority*, there is a sense in which I think it important, and reliance on it most natural and reasonable. I never meet a superior mind without some degree of reliance on it. From such a mind as Christ's, I am sure I can hear nothing but truth. Whatever he says, I am sure will, when fully understood, be found in harmony with God's perfection. This leads me to a reverential study of his words, as of no other man. If in the course of such study I meet anything which seems inconsistent with any known truth, and especially with the pure, liberal conceptions which Jesus has given me, I feel that I have not reached his meaning. I wait for further light, I examine the dark passage again and again, and the probability is that the light will at length shine. If not, I cannot suffer from my ignorance.

"I will only add, that to *us* the great evidence of the miracles is found in the religion itself, and in Christ's character, neither of which can be understood without them, and with which they have vital connections. Without the divine excellence of Christ, the testimony of the miracles would not satisfy us. This is the grand foundation and object of faith. Still, the miracles do not cease to be important, for they are among the bright manifestations of his character. Their harmony with it is a proof of its existence; and, above all, there are vast multitudes, who, with some moral appreciation of Christ, are yet so imperfect, so earthly, that these outward manifestations of his greatness and of his connection with God have real value as helps to faith.

"I have written this letter with an impatient haste, which sometimes gets possession of me. I cannot correct it. Will you copy it fairly, and show it to Mr. Parker, letting him understand that I have written as a friend, and not as an author, and without any aim at precision? Will you then send it back to me, as there are thoughts which I may wish to expand when I can get time?

"Your sincere friend."

"*Newport, July 18, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> . . . I hold a *clear conviction* of truth to be essential to a religious teacher, and I reprobate, as well as

<sup>1</sup> To Miss E. P. Peabody.



dread, the teaching of that which we have not thought upon calmly and seriously, or which, on being examined, has opened before us problems, perplexities, difficulties, rendering much reflection needful in order to our speaking with the deliberate consciousness of truth. The want of reverence for truth, manifest in the rash teaching of our times, shocks me greatly. I owe the little which I am to the conscientiousness with which I have listened to objections springing up in my own mind to what I have inclined and sometimes thirsted to believe, and I have attained through this to a serenity of faith that once seemed denied in the present state.

“ I am grieved to find you insensible to the clear, bright distinction between Jesus Christ and ourselves. To me, and I should think to every reader of the New Testament, he stands apart, alone, in the only particular in which separation is to be desired. He is a being of moral perfection, unstained by sin. The great consciousness which pervades, haunts, darkens, all human spirits, that of *moral evil*, throws not the slightest shade over him. His consciousness is his own; his whole tone, indeed, is his own, and would be false in any other. Though he came to be an example, yet in the points in which we so much need an example, in our conflict with inward evil, in our approach to God as sinners in penitence and self-purification, he wholly fails us. It was in reference to this that I spoke of him as a ‘moral miracle,’ not intending by this to refer at all to the formation of his character, which, though wholly unknown to us, was wholly free, but to the exception which his character forms to *all human experience*. To my mind, he was intended to be an anticipation of the perfection to which we are guided, to reveal to us its existence, to guide and aid us towards it, to show us that which exists in a germ in all souls. This view you must have gathered from my writings. But my own history, and the history of the race, and of the best beings I have known, have taught me the immense distance of us all from Christ. He is to be approached by gradual self-crucifixion, by a war with the evil within us which will not end till the grave. The idea that the germ within us is to shoot up at once into the perfection of Jesus, — that we are to be ‘gifted’ in this stage of our being ‘with his powers,’ to be ‘as powerful as a teacher,’ — this certainly never entered my thoughts, and it shows such a self-ignorance, such an ignorance of human history and human life, that one wonders how it can have entered a sound mind. Of the formation of Christ’s mind we know nothing, and the secrecy in which his spiritual history is veiled is no small presumption against its applicableness to ourselves. Infinite wisdom has infinite modes of disciplining and unfolding the spirit.

His great end, of revealing to us the Perfect, is equally answered, be his spiritual history what it may. All spirits, however unfolded, are essentially one. In the response of our spirits to his perfection, in his deep fraternal sympathy with the human soul, and in his divine promises, we have foundations of the profoundest, most joyful faith in our heavenly destiny. I am grieved, as I must say, by extravagances on this and other points, because I have lived in hope of the manifestation of a truth and spiritual life which is to give a new impulse to the world, and it is some trial, at my time of life, to have such hope baffled. However, I do not despair. The true teachers, who are to unite 'love and power and soundness of mind,' will come.

"As to Mr. Parker, I wish him to preach what he thoroughly believes and feels. I trust the account you received of attempts to put him down was in the main a fiction. Let the full heart pour itself forth. And still more it will rejoice me to find a good accomplished which I cannot anticipate. I want no dark prophecies accomplished, but I do assure you, the weaknesses of the good are among the trials of my faith. I repeat it, I am too much occupied to follow up this subject now. Give my love to Mr. Parker. I shall be glad to hear from him, and in perfect freedom. I think he is probably one of the many who are to be made wise by error and suffering, but I honor his virtues, I feel that he has seized on some great truths, and I earnestly desire for him the illumination which will make him an unmixed blessing to his fellow-creatures."

"*Newport, August, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> . . . . You will not infer from my letters that I am at all grieved at the publication of views from which I dissent. Let the honest, earnest spirit speak, and the more fully and freely for attempts to put it to silence. I am somewhat disappointed that this new movement is to do so little for the spiritual regeneration of society, which, however, must go on, and which no errors can long keep back. To me, Christ is the great spiritualist. This view binds me to him. Under him, the battle of the human race is to be fought. Any speculations which throw mists or doubts over his history, and diminish the conviction of his grandeur and importance, are poor, and must come to naught. I do not believe that the great object of faith, which is the perfection of the human soul, or everlasting, unbounded spiritual development, is to be seized as a reality, and made the grand aspiration and end of life, without the quickening, inspiring influences of his character and truth. Indeed, perfection becomes a dim shadow, without the

<sup>1</sup> To Miss E. P. Peabody.

help of his living manifestation of it. I do fear a tendency, in the present movement, to loosen the tie which binds the soul to its great Friend and Deliverer. It would seem as if your experience had shown you human nature developing its highest sentiments without help and confirmation from abroad. To me, history and observation and experience read very different lessons, and the consequences of overlooking them are not doubtful. The profound ignorance of Jesus Christ shown by those who find in him a restraint, and also talk of outgrowing him, is discouraging. I find in him only freedom.

"I have little hope in this new movement, except as it indicates deep wants of the soul, and a consciousness of its greatness. Nor have I fears. I believe in the purity of those who are concerned in it. I believe, too, that it will spread but little, for there is little in the times to favor any who separate themselves comparatively from the grand impulse given by Christ to the world. I see as yet but one decided step towards a higher practical manifestation of Christianity, and that is *Abolition*, and how imperfect that is we both know.

"I have seen, this last week, a member of the Mendon community. I look to *that* with a good deal of hope. I never hoped so strongly and so patiently."

"*September 10, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> Here, as in England, we have a stir. Happily, we have no material anti-supernaturalists. Our reformers are spiritualists, and hold many grand truths; but in identifying themselves a good deal with Cousin's crude system, they have lost the life of an original movement. Some among them seem to lean to the anti-miraculous, have got the German notions of 'myths,' &c., and I fear are loosening their hold on Christ. They are anxious to defend the soul's immediate connection with God. They fear lest Christ be made a barrier between the soul and the Supreme, and are in danger of substituting private inspiration for Christianity. Should they go thus far, my hopes from them will cease wholly; but as yet the elements are in great agitation, and it is hard to say how they will arrange themselves. I have great sympathy with the spiritualists; but I know so well the needs of the soul, and the conditions of its growth, that I look jealously on whatever may shake the foundations of Christianity. For myself, I see no inconsistency between admitting miracles, and resting Christianity on a spiritual basis—between recognizing the inward as supreme, and reverencing the authority of Christ. You will see,

<sup>1</sup> To the Rev. James Martineau.



from these views, that I go along with your movement more than with ours."

1841. "The fearful amount of sin and suffering in the world depresses and troubles you. How is God's goodness to be reconciled with what we see and read of in human affairs? This is the old problem of the 'origin of evil,' which has perplexed thinking minds from the beginning of the world. I cannot hope to explain what the greatest minds have left obscure. In truth, I do not desire to remove obscurity from Providence; for in making the universe a plain thing, I should bring it down to the littleness of my own mind; I should rob it of all its grandeur. If it be infinite, the work of an infinite mind, it must transcend my conceptions, stretch beyond my intellect, and I must live encircled with impenetrable mysteries. The darkness of God's providence is to me an expression of its *vastness*, its immeasurable grandeur. I cannot doubt. I adore.

"Of much that is evil in human life I see the cause and the cure. Many forms of human suffering I would not remove, if I could; for I see that we owe to them all the interest and dignity of life, and I am sure, that, in proportion as I shall be able to penetrate the system, much which now perplexes me will be revealed in a glorious light. Man, if a *free moral being*, must be tried, must be exposed to temptation, must have a wide range of action, must be liable to much sin and much suffering. He cannot be happy in the beginning of his career, for, from the essential laws of a free being, he can have no happiness but what he wins amidst temptation. A brute may be made as happy as he can be, at first. Man, God's free moral child, cannot know happiness till, by his own striving, he has risen to goodness and sanctity. I do not see how sin and suffering can be removed, but by striking out from our nature its chief glories.

"I have expressed some views on this general subject in a discourse recently published, in consequence of the loss of an excellent friend on board the Lexington, which I send you. Perhaps some of these may interest and relieve you. It is so long since doubts of the Divine goodness have crossed my mind, that I hardly know how to meet them. This truth comes to me as an intuitive one. I meet it everywhere. I can no more question it than I can the supreme worth and beauty of virtue."

## CHAPTER III. — SOCIAL REFORMS.

TEMPERAMENT and training, religious aspirations and philosophical views, above all, the tendencies of the times, conspired to make Dr. Channing a Social Reformer; although the loftiness of his desires and aims, the delicacy of his feelings, the refinement of his tastes, his habits of contemplative thought, and his reverence for individual freedom, enveloped him in a sphere of courteous reserve, and guarded him from familiar contact with all rude radicalism. He was as loyal as he was independent, as gentle as he was resolute, as soft to receive any impress of beauty as he was firm to resist wrong. In a letter written but a few months before his death, he has thus faithfully portrayed his own dispositions.

“*Boston, March 12, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> I understand fully your language, when you speak of *reform* as your ‘*work-shop*.’ I fear I understand it too well, that is, I am too prone to shrink from the work. Reform is resistance of rooted corruptions and evils, and my tendency is to turn away from the contemplation of evils. My mind seeks the good, the perfect, the beautiful. It is a degree of torture to bring vividly to my apprehension what man is suffering from his own crimes and from the wrongs and cruelty of his brother. No perfection of art, expended on purely tragic and horrible subjects, can reconcile me to them. It is only from a sense of duty that I read a narrative of guilt or woe in the papers. When the darkness, indeed, is lighted up by moral greatness or beauty, I can endure, and even enjoy it. You see I am made of but poor material for a reformer. But on this very account the work is good for me. I need it, not, as many do, to give me excitement, for I find enough, perhaps too much, to excite me in the common experience of life, in meditation, in abstract truth; but to save me from a refined selfishness, to give me force, disinterestedness, true dignity and elevation, to link me by a new faith to God, by a deeper love to my race, and to make me a blessing to the world.

“I know not how far I have explained my shrinking from the work of reform, but, be the cause what it may, let us not turn away from us the cross, but willingly, gratefully, accept it, when God lays it on us; and he does lay it on us, whenever he penetrates our hearts with a deep feeling of the degradation, miseries, oppressions, crimes, of our human brethren, and awakens longings for their redemption. In thus calling us, he imposes on us a burden, such as

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Lydia Maria Child.

the ancient prophets groaned under. We must 'drink of the cup' and be 'baptized into the baptism' of our Master. We must expect persecution in some form or other; but this is a light matter, compared with the painful necessity of fixing our eyes and souls on evil, and with the frequent apparent failure of our labor. Here, here is the trial. Could we lift up our fellow-creatures at once to the happiness and excellence which we aspire after, what a joy would reform be! But, alas! if we do remove a few pressing evils, how many remain! What a cloud still hangs over the earth! Sometimes evil seems to grow up under the efforts to repress it. Were it not for our *faith*, who could persevere? But with this faith, what a secret, sustaining joy flows into and mingles with sincere labors for humanity! The little we accomplish becomes to us a pledge of something infinitely greater. We know that the brighter futurity which our hearts yearn for is not a dream, — that good is to triumph over evil, and to triumph through the sacrifices of the good.

"You see I would wed you and myself to reform; and yet we must be something *more* than reformers. We must give our nature a fair chance; we must not wither it by too narrow modes of action. Let your genius have free play. We are better reformers, — because calmer and wiser, because we have more weapons to work with, — if we give a wide range to thought, imagination, taste, and the affections. We must be cheerful, too, in our war with evil, for gloom is apt to become sullenness, ill-humor, and bitterness.

"Your sincere friend."

The following extracts will best reveal the spirit with which Dr. Channing was animated as a social reformer.

1825. "Christianity through its whole extent is a religion of love. I know no better name for it than Universal Love. God, not satisfied with giving lessons in his works and in our own frames, has sent a messenger of special glory, to teach us with new clearness and power the obligation, happiness, and dignity of benevolence. Christianity everywhere inculcates love, and a love so much wider, purer, nobler, than had before entered men's thoughts, that it is with propriety called a new commandment. Men, as we have seen, have felt and practised social kindness before, without a revelation, for nature always inspired it. But this kindness had been confined. It had been accumulated on a few objects. Collected, like the sun's rays, to a point, it had burned intensely; but beyond that point it had exerted little power. Before Christianity, the private affections had exhausted men's stock of love. The claims of family and of country had been recognized, but not the claims of



mankind. The bond of consanguinity was felt, but not the bond of a common nature. A stranger was hardly distinguished from a foe. Beyond the limit of his country, the individual imagined he had no duties to perform, and even trampled on the rights and happiness of human beings with little compunction. But the ties of family and of country were never intended to circumscribe the soul. Man is connected at birth with a few beings, that the spirit of humanity may be called forth by their tenderness; and whenever domestic or national attachments become exclusive, engrossing, clannish, so as to shut out the general claims of the human race, the highest end of Providence is frustrated, and home, instead of being the nursery, becomes the grave of the heart.

“Christianity lays the foundation of a universal love, by revealing to us the greatness of that nature in which all men participate, — by inspiring reverence for the human soul, be that soul lodged wherever it may, — by teaching us that all the outward distinctions of birth, rank, wealth, honor, which human pride foolishly swells into importance, and which separate different classes from each other, as if they were different races, are not worthy to be named in comparison with those essential faculties and affections which the poorest and most unprosperous derive as liberally from God as those who disdain them. Christian love is founded on the grandeur of man’s nature, its likeness to God, its immortality, its powers of endless progress, — on the end for which it is created, of living forever, diffusing itself illimitably, and enjoying God and the universe through eternity. He who has never looked through man’s outward condition, through the accidental trappings of fortune and fashion, to the naked soul, and there seen God’s image commanding reverence and a spiritual grandeur which turns to littleness all that is most glorious in nature, — such a man may have kindness, for of this he cannot easily divest himself, but he is a stranger to the distinctive love of Christianity, and knows nothing of the intenseness and diffusiveness with which the heart can bind itself to the human race.

“The true Christian, who is instructed by Christ in the nature of the soul, and in the purposes for which it was made, comes to love *man* as *man*, and to be interested in him wherever he dwells. The bounds of family or of country cannot confine him. Wherever human nature has put itself forth in power and virtue, he delights to contemplate it, and feels a brother’s union with the excellent who have shed a lustre on past times, or who shine in distant regions, and even with the good who have ascended to heaven. The thought, that each human being has within him the capacities of

like excellence, and that Christ has lived and died to kindle this divine life in all souls, creates an interest in every human being which neither distance, nor strangeness, nor injury, nor even vice, can destroy. . . .

“Much, much indeed remains for Christianity to achieve and to conquer, before it will accomplish its office of inspiring in all men this universal love. It has to break down the aristocracy of birth, the aristocracy of wealth, the sectarianism and bigotry of the religious world, the clannish spirit of nations, and many other barriers of pride and selfishness. But it is equal to its work. It is silently, but steadily, teaching men to recognize their nature and the great purposes of their being, — proving to them that there is no glory but in self-conquest and in a wide charity, — pleading the cause of the poor, the ignorant, and the stranger, — infusing a candor which sees with joy the virtues of other parties, other sects, other countries, — and gradually generating in the individual the consciousness that he is made for his race, for God, and for the universe. This spirit is too godlike to be gained and perfected in a moment or a century, or even during man’s existence in this world. It is enough that we see in men the dawning and promise of this universal love.” ✓✓

Measured by this ideal of unity, harmony, and perfect co-operation, the actual life in professedly Christian communities appeared to Dr. Channing as little like the true “kingdom of heaven,” as the unsteady steps and awkward gestures of a child just learning to walk resemble the graceful vigor of mature manhood. But from the successes of the past he drew animating hopes for the future. His views of the social needs of Christendom are thus presented: —

“*November, 1833.* I do not mean to represent society as *openly* or *utterly* hostile to Christianity. I do not found my exhortations on any prevalent profligacy of manners. I do not deny that an important change has been made in our social character by Christian principles. On the contrary, I affirm this. I maintain, however, that this very improvement of the community — being as yet very partial, and rather on the surface than in the heart — is one of our perils, tending, as it does, to reconcile us to a *mediocrity* of virtue, and to blind us to the great evils with which society is yet deformed. I do not, then, feel myself called, in order to enforce my exhortation, to paint in dark and revolting characters the present state of the world. And that man must indeed be chargeable either with gross ignorance or gross prejudice, who

does not see in Christian countries many happy influences of the gospel. . . .

“Manners are softened, and the domestic relations hallowed; woman is rescued from degradation, and parental authority is changed from a harsh tyranny into affectionate control. Human suffering awakens new sympathy, and individual and associated efforts are continually diminishing its amount. War has parted with much of its cruelty, and the claims of a disarmed enemy are recognized. Even despotism, though it resists attempts to limit its power by constitutional barriers, is restrained by the spirit of society from its ancient excesses, and is laboring to improve the condition, education, and morals of its subjects. Here are glorious revolutions, and Christianity, were it to win no other victories, would deserve for these reforms the everlasting gratitude of the human race. But these are only superficial changes, compared with its great purpose. Its design is, to work more deeply, to guide and rouse men to the culture of that spiritual and universal charity which distinguished Christ; and this, however cherished in individuals, has not yet become the spirit of society, — has not yet cast down the strongholds of human selfishness and pride, and made the world a school, to the lessons and influences of which we may surrender ourselves without fear. . . .

“Am I asked in what respects the spirit of the world is opposed to that of Christian love? To answer this question fitly, I should set before you distinctly what I understand by Christian love or charity; but I can now only suggest two thoughts, which, indeed, are so intimately connected, as hardly to admit of division:—Christian love is founded on just and enlarged views of human nature; and, next, it is universal, and tends to embrace all mankind. . . .

“Christian benevolence is built on Christian views of human nature, and can rest on nothing else. This religion is distinguished by revealing man as a being with stronger claims on interest, sympathy, and benevolent concern than can well be conceived. We see in him the most striking and touching contrasts. We see in him the germs of all truth, virtue, and beautiful and generous affections, and stormy passions, lawless appetites, and insatiable desires. We see in him the child of God and the victim of sin, now manifesting the disinterested love of an angel, now betraying the pride, malignity, sensuality, of a demon. We see him *fallen* and *redeemed*, needing infinite compassion, and compassionate according to his need. Who can tell the worth of such a being? Who can count the treasures locked up in one human breast, or the



amount of joys or woes for which every man is preparing? Men travel far to see the wonders of nature and of art. The greatest wonder is man himself. One soul is worth more than material worlds. Such is man as set before us in Christianity, and on these views Christian love is built.

“And need I ask you whether a love thus grounded and nourished is the spirit of society? Is it the habit of society to meditate on the great purposes for which each human being was framed? Has society yet learned man’s relation to God, his powers, his perils, his immortality? Are these the thoughts which circulate in conversation, these the convictions which are brought home to you in your ordinary intercourse? Need I tell you how blind the multitude yet are to what is nearest them and concerns them most deeply, to their own nature, — how they overlook the spiritual in man, — how they stop at the outward and accidental, — how few penetrate to the soul and discern in that responsible, immortal being an object for unbounded solicitude and love? The multitude are living an outward life, discerning little but what meets the eye, valuing little but what can be weighed or measured by the senses, estimating one another by outward success, conflicting or co-operating with one another for outward interests. The consciousness of what is inward and spiritual and immortal, — how faintly does it stir in the multitude! Man’s solemn, infinite connections with God and eternity are unacknowledged or forgotten, and so little are they comprehended, that, when urged on the conscience as realities, as motives to action and as foundations of love, they are dismissed as too unsubstantial or refined to exert a serious influence on life. Thus the spirit of society is virtually hostile to those great truths in regard to human nature on which Christian love is built, and without which we cannot steadfastly and disinterestedly bind ourselves to our race.

“I now pass to the second view of Christian love which I prepared to set before you, and which is intimately connected with the preceding. It is universal, or tends to embrace all the various orders and conditions of mankind. Having its foundation and chief nutriment in just views of human nature, it cannot but comprehend all to whom this nature belongs. It is a love of man as *man*, as the spiritual and immortal child of God; and from this dignity no human being is excluded. It sees and feels how poor are all the outward distinctions of men in comparison with those powers and prospects which are the common property of the race. To the enlightened Christian, the barriers which divide men vanish. What is high birth, as it is called? To him, all men are born of God,

are of heavenly parentage, and bearing the image of their Father. What is wealth? To the Christian, every man has infinite wealth within his reach, — the imperishable treasures of intelligence, conscience, affection, and moral strength, of faith, hope, charity, — and nothing seems more insane than to weigh against these silver and gold. Christian love bounds itself to none of this world's distinctions. It is not even repelled by crime. Enemies are not excluded from its concern, for they are still men, and share the mercy of a common Father.

“Thus universal, all-comprehending, is the love which springs from just views of man's nature and relation to God. And is this the spirit of society? Does society breathe and nurture this, or does it inculcate narrowness, exclusiveness, and indifference towards the great mass of mankind? Do we see in the world a prevalent respect for what all human beings partake? On the contrary, do not men attach themselves to what is peculiar, to what distinguishes one man from another, and especially to outward distinction; and is there not a tendency to overlook, as of little value, those who in these respects are depressed? Do they not worship the accidents, adventitious, unessential circumstances, of the human being, — birth, outward appearance, wealth, manner, rank, show, — and ground on these a consciousness of a superiority which divides them from others? Can we say of that distinction, which is alone important in the sight of God, which is confined to no condition, which is to outlive all the inequalities of life, and which, far from separating, binds those who possess it more and more to their race, — I mean moral and religious worth, — can we say of this, that it is the object of general homage, before whose commanding presence all lower differences among men are abased? The influence of outward condition in attracting or repelling men's sympathies and interest is one of the most striking features of modern society, and gives mournful proof of the faint hold which Christianity has as yet gained over the hearts and minds of men. Jesus deigned not to wear the outward distinctions of life, and chose for the highest office on earth, and as his intimate friends, those who wanted these; and his design was, that the sympathies and affections of his disciples should embrace all their fellow-creatures, unchecked by outward barriers, that man in every situation should be regarded with tenderness and respect. I do not say, that his design has wholly failed. Christianity is breaking down the walls which divide the children of God's great family; but how much of the work remains to be done! and who can deny, that, on the whole, the spirit of society is adverse to this enlarged, all-embracing spirit of Christ? . . .

“Such is the spirit of society. Christianity teaches us to feel ourselves members of the whole human family; society, to make or keep ourselves members of some favored caste. Christianity calls us to unite ourselves with others; society, to separate ourselves from them. Christianity teaches us to raise others; society, to rise above them. Christianity calls us to narrow the space between ourselves and our inferiors by communicating to them, as we have ability, what is most valuable in our own minds; society tells us to leave them to their degradation. Christianity summons us to employ superior ability, if such we have, as a means of wider and more beneficent action on the world; society suggests that these are a means of personal elevation. Christianity teaches us that what is peculiar in our lot or our acquisitions is of little worth in comparison with what we possess in common with our race; society teaches us to cling to what is peculiar as our highest honor and most precious possession. Fraternal union, sympathy, aid, is the spirit of Christianity; exclusiveness is the spirit of the world. And this spirit is not confined to what is called the highest class. It burns, perhaps, more intensely in those who are seeking than in those who occupy the eminences of social life. It is a disposition to undervalue those who want what we possess, to narrow our sympathies to one or another class, to forget the great bond of *humanity*. This spirit of exclusiveness triumphs over the spirit of Christianity, and, through its prevalence, the great work given to every human being, which is to improve his less favored fellow-being, is slighted. The sublime sphere of usefulness is little occupied. A spirit of rivalry, jealousy, envy, selfish competition, supplants the spirit of mutual interest, the respect, support, and aid, by which Christianity proposes to knit mankind into a *universal brotherhood*. . . .

“If we may trust the opinions of foreigners, the spirit of society in this country is peculiarly hostile to that of Christian love. They tell us, that, as a people, we are singularly restless and aspiring; that for the old aristocracy of birth we have substituted that of wealth; that every nerve is strained to accumulate, and by accumulation to scale the high places of society; that mammon has nowhere such fervent worshippers; that the intellect of the nation is contracted into a selfish shrewdness, and that the generous sentiments are absorbed in the spirit of calculation. We pronounce this false; but falsehood has often a foundation, however slight, in truth. In a country like ours, where industry is unshackled and the partition-walls of rank are easily cleared, where examples of brilliant success and sudden elevation appeal to the hopes of the multitude, where wealth is of easier acquisition and confers higher



privileges than among any other people, we have reason to dread the prevalence of a self-seeking and self-elevating spirit, of a burning thirst for gain and distinction singularly hostile to the generous and all-comprehending benevolence of Jesus Christ."

Having thus learned the central principle of love, one in essence, and universal in aim, that animated Dr. Channing as a reformer, and the uncompromising justice with which he condemned the pervading selfishness of modern society, while gratefully recognizing the humanity already infused by Christianity into legislation and manners, let us proceed to consider in what modes he brought his benevolence to bear upon particular evils.

The following paper, drawn up by him, will show the spirit which he desired to call out in his own congregation, and the direction which he sought to give to their energies.

"It being the duty of those who are favored with the Christian religion to promote, as they have ability, piety, good morals, and human happiness, we, the subscribers, members of the religious society in Federal Street, agree to pay annually the sums annexed to our names, to be applied, by a committee chosen annually by ourselves, to the following objects, viz.:—1. The provision of moral and religious instruction for the destitute in this town; 2. the publication of useful tracts; 3. the education of young men of suitable qualifications for the ministry, especially of any belonging to this society, and needing pecuniary aid; 4. the support of missionaries in parts of the country destitute of a regular ministry; and 5. in general, the encouragement of any useful design which the benevolence of the age and the wants of the community may suggest.

"Among these designs the following may be named:—1. The improvement of the poor, and the introduction of more economical and efficacious methods of teaching; 2. The investigation of the state of prisons, and the introduction of a moral treatment of criminals, and of methods of relieving worthy but unfortunate debtors; 3. The purification of parts of the town notoriously corrupt; 4. The suppression of intemperance and kindred vices; 5. The employment of the poor, the removal of abuses by which they are involved in litigation, the introduction among them of economical improvements, and, in general, the extension of just ideas as to the best methods of relieving and preventing poverty; 6. The improvement of particular classes of men, whose occupations are found to be peculiarly unfavorable to good morals and religion.

"The committee, availing itself of the service of individuals in

the society, who have leisure and benevolence, and by directing a continued attention to one or more of these objects, according to the number and dispositions of their associates, may, it is believed, produce important results, and convert into realities what are now only the wishes and suggestions of philanthropy."

An "Association of the Members of the Federal Street Society for Benevolent Purposes" was also formed, June 6th, 1824, which continued its operations for ten years, contributing generously to various charitable enterprises, encouraging Sunday schools, missions, and the ministry at large, and supporting students at the Divinity School.

Besides these efforts within his own congregation, Dr. Channing co-operated, so far as health and time allowed, with the deservedly honored "Wednesday Evening Association," sometimes called the "Beneficent Association," which was the mother of so many wise and generous plans of moral and social improvement. Its first meeting was held at his house, in February, 1822, and for many years it carried on a series of thorough investigations, and quiet but efficient reforms, which were greatly instrumental in giving to Boston its peculiar character of philanthropic earnestness. The leading objects of this society were, — "1. To extend the knowledge of true religion, and to advance its practical influence; 2. To promote any plans of a public nature for improving the condition of society; 3. To produce a unity of purpose and effort among Unitarian Christians." Under date of May 17th, 1826, it is recorded among the proceedings of the Association, that "Dr. Channing made an address on the expediency and practicability of procuring for the poor of the city a preacher, who should associate with himself as instructors intelligent laymen," &c. The subject of suitable habitations for the poor was at the same time brought forward, and thenceforth frequently considered, until finally was originated Dr. Tuckerman's "Ministry at Large." How deep and constant was Dr. Channing's interest in the plans of his fervent and devoted friend will hereafter fully appear. His thoughts were continually becoming concentrated more and more upon the terrible problem of Pauperism, before which the benevolence of all civilized states stands paralyzed and aghast; and he saw more clearly each year that what the times demanded was, that the axe should be laid at the very root of ignorance, temptation, and strife, by substituting for the present unjust and unequal distribution of the privileges of life some system of cordial, respectful, brotherly co-operation. But before presenting his views on this fundamental reform, from which alone can truly efficient charity grow up, let us

first trace the course of his opinions in relation to various benevolent movements.

We have seen, at an earlier period, how strong was Dr. Channing's desire to advance the triumph of Peace over the custom of War, which Barbarism has left in disastrous legacy to Civilization; and on every suitable occasion, through his whole life, he sought with increasing zeal to cultivate a spirit of humane policy, which might banish from among Christian states this hoary crime, that has so long preyed on their prosperity and virtue. Though thus opposed to war, however, he could not see that the principle of *Non-Resistance* was a right one, either between individuals or nations. His objections to the "ultra" peace doctrine are thus stated by himself.

"September 9, 1829.<sup>1</sup> I received and have read with much pleasure the book you sent me on the 'Unlawfulness of War.' You ask my opinion on this subject. I agree with your author in everything but the *main point*. I abhor war as much as he does, but the view of its 'absolute unlawfulness,' I cannot accede to. I think my opinion of some weight, because my feelings carry me strongly to this doctrine, and nothing, it seems to me, but the power of truth, prevents my joining the most rigid interpreters of the Christian precepts which relate to this subject. I think the author has erred fundamentally in supposing that we have nothing to do but to obey the laws of Christianity without reasoning about them, or that our religion prescribes particular acts or courses which we are to follow without a thought of consequences. Christianity does anything but lay down a precise law, telling us where to plant every footstep, and giving such plain prescriptions that we need only hear the words to receive their full significance immediately. Its laws are given in bold, and sometimes hyperbolic language, and require the constant exercise of good sense and reason to determine their precise import. Above all, they enjoin a spirit, or inward principle, leaving us very much to our own discretion as to the mode of applying it. The precept, 'Resist not evil,' is plainly to be understood with much limitation, for, were it literally followed, without exception, by the private individual and magistrate, all government, domestic and civil, would cease, and society would fall a prey to its worst members. The precept was not intended to forbid all resistance, but to forbid the *bad passions* from which resistance generally springs. A discipline of the heart is enjoined, not any outward course. Christianity is intended to raise us to

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe, Liverpool.



universal, unbounded love, and the only question is, whether war is inconsistent with this spirit. You may say it is. You may ask, How can I turn against one whom I sincerely love instruments of death? I answer, it is very possible to possess a sincere regard for the happiness of another being, sympathize strongly with his sufferings, and yet to subject him to severe suffering, and even to death. How often does the judge pass sentence on a criminal for whom he feels deeply! I am to love the bad man; but I am also to love society, to love my family, my friends, my country; and if the bad man arm himself for the ruin of these, I am bound to repel him. In so doing, do I not act from a principle of charity, especially if to save the good, to defend the community, I expose my own life in resisting the bad? I can certainly oppose a wicked man's purposes, and in so doing can inflict on him severe pain, without hating him, and even with the deepest grief for his character and punishment. I may even feel, through the strength of my philanthropy, a severer pain than I inflict. War, then, is not necessarily inconsistent with the spirit of Christian love. On the contrary, I fear that I should want this love, were I to look quietly and unresistingly on the undisguised efforts of unprincipled men to spoil and enslave my country, my children, — all who are especially confided to my care. War, then, is not absolutely, or in all possible cases, a crime. Here I dissent from your author.

“But practically I should go almost as far as he would. The whole system of war, as it now exists, is abominable. The profession of a soldier, according to this system, is immoral, and most actual wars are unjust; so that a philanthropist and Christian should die sooner than engage in them. These views, I think, if wisely expounded, would go much farther towards the suppression of war than the doctrine of its absolute unlawfulness.

“I know it is objected, that, if any war is allowed to be just, all will be found so; that no lines can be drawn between the lawful and unlawful. So the fanatic says no line can be drawn between innocent indulgence and luxury, between moderate and excessive ornament, and therefore all indulgence and ornament must be renounced. I do not believe in the wisdom or virtue of escaping the labor and responsibility of moral discrimination by flying to an extreme principle. Every moral question is as open to this objection as war. Perhaps a sound mind can make the right distinctions on war as easily as on most of the solemn concerns of life. I cannot, however, explain myself now.”

But though inclined to fear that the earnest band of Non-Resistants, who were then firmly applying the principle of perfect and

perpetual peace to all the relations of individuals and states, would rather retard than hasten the growth of sound feeling in the public heart, and thus compelled in justice to stand aloof from, and even by discriminating statements to oppose, a body of reformers whom as individuals he profoundly respected, Dr. Channing was still less disposed to co-operate with those over-prudent peace-men, who, loud and zealous in hours of tranquillity, are unseen and unheard in times of peril. The moral intrepidity, which prompted him in early manhood to condemn from the pulpit the war of 1812, had only gained vigor through years of observation and experience; and no considerations of expediency or caution made him hesitate for an instant to reprove the popular madness, when unscrupulous politicians hurried this nation to the brink of hostilities for a paltry indemnity and a strip of land. In 1835, though the Executive of the United States advised war with France, and many eloquent men in Congress advocated violent measures, Dr. Channing appeared before his people in a discourse, that was afterwards printed, in which he exposed with sublime sincerity the deadness of the national conscience to the claims of humanity and the true honor of states.<sup>1</sup> And again in 1838 and 1839, — though leading statesmen, and influential papers, and guides of opinion in commercial and social circles reluctantly yielded to the seeming necessity of a struggle with England, — in a lecture on war, which, when published, was prefaced with a few pages of most plain and pungent appeal, he indignantly exposed the abominable horrors and gratuitous wickedness of this infernal usage.<sup>2</sup> The following letters will show how, also, through private channels, he endeavored to exert his influence for the preservation of peace.

“*Boston, December 5, 1835.*<sup>3</sup> You have borne your testimony against war very strongly. Ought not Christians to speak on this subject as they have never done before? At the present moment we are threatened with war for a punctilio, a matter of etiquette. All the crimes and miseries of war are to be encountered for nothing, and yet the public press utters not a word on our obligations as a Christian community. The politicians have the whole affair in their hands. The Christians among us sit still and silent, and leave worldly, self-seeking politicians to decide whether they shall imbrue their hands in the blood of their brethren. Is Christianity always to remain a dead letter in the determination of national

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. IV. pp. 237–263. One Volume Edition, pp. 654–664.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. V. pp. 109–147. One Volume Edition, pp. 664–679.

<sup>3</sup> To Francis Wayland, D. D.

concerns, and especially of peace and war? I wish you would revolve this subject in your mind."

"*Boston, February 17, 1836.*<sup>1</sup> We may hope that this exposition will not be lost. Many, I am assured, have received such impressions from the work as we should desire. We shall neither of us probably live to see the accomplishment of this and other benevolent objects in which we have been engaged, but we must be grateful if we can do anything to advance them. You, I am sure, have not labored in vain. You must have been gratified with seeing the great disinclination of the community to second the recent war movements of the President. Undoubtedly, wise or prudential considerations had a large share in producing this reluctance; but I believe an important effect was produced by more Christian and moral views of war, and by the diffusion of juster views of military glory. Undoubtedly, much, very much, remains to be done. The spirit of nations and of the multitude is not the spirit of Christ. But is not the true relation of man to man better understood? Is it not felt, that to butcher God's children, our spiritual brethren, is a fearful crime? I do not despair of the power of truth, because the victory is not immediately won, because we, creatures of a day, do not witness the utter prostration of long-established errors and corruptions. It is a privilege to witness silent changes, and this happiness is not denied us. It is my earnest desire, that your last days may be cheered by brighter hopes and a stronger faith. Accept the assurances of the sincere respect of your friend."

"*Boston, March 7, 1841.*<sup>2</sup> I have received your 'resolutions' on the subject of war, and I should be unjust to my feelings, if I did not thank you for them in the strongest manner. It is very cheering to find that a man may breathe the atmosphere of a legislative chamber and escape its deadly influence. You will be told, I doubt not, of the futility of all such movements, but I trust you will not be discouraged. There is at this moment in our community a disposition to apply great principles to practice, to realize moral and religious ideas, such as never existed before. It works silently where it is little suspected, and is repressed chiefly by the fear of finding no sympathy. On this account I attach much importance to the strong expression of great principles by men in public life.

"In regard to your first resolution, it has often occurred to me, that non-intercourse might and should be substituted for war; but the question arises, whether in the present state of the world it can

<sup>1</sup> To Noah Worcester, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To John L. O'Sullivan, Esq.



be carried out. The merchants of both countries would, to a man, employ all their ingenuity in eluding it; and would not an indirect intercourse be established, which would make the policy of the government a mere name? I know too little of trade to judge of the validity of this objection; but it is the only one which occurs to me, and I should hope that a government resolved on enforcing non-intercourse might do it.

“I have much faith in the pacific system *cordially* adopted by a nation. A nation speaking in a voice of true good-will and philanthropy, shrinking from war, not through fear or interested motives, but from reverence for justice and Christian love, and appealing to the world against wrong, would not speak in vain. But a vast change is first to be wrought, before such a voice can go forth from any community. I pray God that you may help to bring on this better age.

“The objections of my friend Dr. Follen to a congress of nations, published in the Democratic Review, seem to me strong. The essential idea which we wish to establish is *Arbitration*. The mode is unimportant, if we can but secure impartiality.”

It is scarcely necessary to say, that Dr. Channing felt the strongest detestation for that remnant of antiquated inhumanity called duelling; but as a scandalous occurrence in his own community called forth a slight expression of his feelings on the subject, it may be well here to record it.

“I have been much shocked within a few days by the want of Christian feeling on the subject of *duelling* here. A Christian community, instructed as ours is in the benevolent principles of our religion, ought to have spoken with an authority and a severity of rebuke which would teach the young and unprincipled, that this outrage on our institutions, faith, and manners cannot be endured. I see in this case how little the sublimity and beauty of the spirit of Christ are felt. Even those who oppose duelling rest too much on mere authority, and not on its hostility to all the principles which ennoble the soul. This is in a discouraging tone, and yet I am not discouraged. The more I see of evil, the more I am assured of the power which is to triumph over it. We are low enough, I feel, and yet we have risen in comparison with the past.”

Closely connected with his views of the lawfulness and unlawfulness of the exercise of force, as an instrument of justice between nation and nation, were Dr. Channing's opinions in regard to legal restraints and penalties, as a means of internal policy. He looked with warm and eager sympathy upon every attempt to reform the

cruel abuses which have so long disgraced the dens where Christians have pent up their erring brethren to fester in their crimes, and was ready to assert, with the noble-hearted Roscoe, "that beneficence, and not revenge, should be the motive of all criminal proceedings," and that "prisons cannot be conducted upon opposite and discordant principles, but must be either places of vindictive and exemplary punishment, or places of instruction, industry, and reform."<sup>1</sup> The following letters will show the gradual development of his faith in the mighty power of humane treatment to lift up the most debased and brutal to the full stature of man.

"*October 28, 1825.*<sup>2</sup> I wish, through you, to thank your father for his last publication on 'Penal Jurisprudence.' I have intended for some time to answer his kind letter, but have waited in hope of being able to give more attention to the subject in which his benevolence is so deeply engaged. I incline much to his views of punishment, but do not hold them with that strength of conviction which would give me courage to act upon them were I a legislator.

"My compassion towards criminals generally prevails over my indignation. When I consider how closely the whole community is bound together, how all the parts act upon one another, how the poorer classes depend on the higher, and catch from them the infection of vice, and how large a share of the guilt of every crime belongs to society, which has exposed the offender to temptation without giving him moral strength or means of defence, I wonder with what face any man can denounce vengeance, and vengeance only, upon criminals. Punishment, I suppose, will correspond with the character of the community, and will grow mild as manners soften. In an iron age it will be cruel. In proportion as the spirit of Christianity is understood and felt, it will become an instrument of reform. I rejoice that your father is provoking discussion, and doubt not that, however some of his views may be questioned, he will lead many to feel more than they have done that they have a common nature with the unhappy convict, and are bound to labor for his restoration."

"*November 30, 1828.*<sup>3</sup> Can legislation do much towards reforming men? Has not the power of government in this, as in everything, been overrated? Can associations do much? Is it not by individual interest, by unaffected individual friendship, by teaching from the lips of philanthropy, and not by official acts, that the

<sup>1</sup> Manuscript letter of Wm. Roscoe, Esq., to Dr. Channing, 1825.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

offender is to be brought to feel what he is, and especially what he may be?

“According to these views, a great object of a prison should be to bring the prisoner within the influence of enlightened and good minds; and until such minds are formed, until individuals rise up, who, instead of acting in societies, will cultivate personal intercourse with the individual prisoner, are we to expect reformation? The prisoner must see himself to be an object of interest, and must see that his nature is still respected, that there are those who hope well and highly for him, or the redeeming principle will not be awakened in him. That we shall arrive at this state of things by and by I doubt not. The barbarous separation made between society and the criminal is not — what we are too apt to call it — a relic of barbarous times, but a part of a barbarous system *now* in being; and it must give way just as far as the light of truth and Christian virtue penetrates the darkness which still hangs over us.”

“*Boston, March 30, 1829.*<sup>1</sup> I am glad that your father sees ground of hope in the views of prison discipline which are gaining ground in this country. I should prefer, were it practicable, a system which would separate the prisoners wholly from one another, and at the same time give them work and other society. Their old connections should be wholly broken off. They should have no communion with one another. This is one step toward reformation. Remove the offender from bad influences.

“But you will say, Do I defend solitary confinement? No. Whilst I wish bad influences to be cut off, I wish good ones to be brought to bear on the criminal. The vicious are to be raised by the help of the virtuous. I would have the enlightened and virtuous brought into connection with the guilty. The good must feel that their goodness is imparted to them to be imparted to others. Those who have been preserved from great crime must not think of themselves as raised by this purity above the vicious, but as thus preserved that they may restore the fallen. *The influence of the enlightened and pure* on the criminal seems to me an essential element of a system for the reformation of offenders. I would have a few trustworthy individuals interested in a prisoner, taught to look upon him as their charge, accustomed to visit and talk to him as a friend, and to encourage his work; and expected to make provision for him on his leaving prison, that is, to find him a field of virtuous industry.

“We are not, perhaps, good enough for this system, but we

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe.



must grow up to it; and until the good take this immediate, active interest in the improvement of the offender, the surest means will be untried. A chaplain would answer my purpose very imperfectly. I want, not an official, but a friendly connection."

"*Philadelphia, April 10, 1832.* Yesterday I almost exhausted myself in a very interesting visit to the Penitentiary, a very noble establishment. I was allowed — which is not a common privilege — to enter the cells and talk with the prisoners. I saw four, I think, who had committed murder in the second degree. They and all the prisoners are confined in solitary cells, and seldom see any countenance but that of the keeper. The system is thought by some to be too severe, as human nature shrinks from nothing so much as from this utter loneliness, and many have feared that the spirit would be broken and the understanding palsied. I think that terrible effects might follow, if the poor secluded beings were not allowed to work. Work, which men at large are apt to think hard, is to them more than recreation. It saves them from a fate worse than death. I found that their minds were bright and active, and that they seemed desirous to make a good use of their discipline. I endeavored to make them feel that society was punishing them, not from revenge, but kindness, and that Providence was most merciful in putting this check on their crimes. We must never lead the most wicked to look on their condition as desperate. They are still our brethren; and if we can once persuade them of our sincere interest in them, we do something, perhaps much, for their recovery. I am not rested yet from this visit."

"*Philadelphia, April 17, 1832.*<sup>1</sup> If you have not already visited the Penitentiary here, I know no place so worthy your attention. I visited this institution a few days ago, and was very much disposed to regard it as the greatest advance yet made in prison discipline. The discretionary power of punishing given to the warden on the Auburn system, and which I dread and abhor, is altogether unnecessary here, and, indeed, no punishment but the occasional withholding of a meal is resorted to. I talked with the prisoners as long as I had power, to ascertain the influence of the system of seclusion on the intellect and the moral character; and my fears as to its stupefying effect seemed to be wholly groundless. I intend to see the attending physician on this subject. The only bad influence which I saw came from the preaching and religious tracts. I think two of the prisoners were bewildered by what they had heard of the sinner's inability to change his heart. Truly this plague of Calvin-

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

ism, like the vermin inflicted on Egypt, finds its way everywhere. I pitied the poor creatures, when I found their cells furnished with tracts of the common sort.

“My great desire has been to connect prisoners with intelligent and religious people, two of whom should have the intellectual and moral care of each convict; but when I think into what hands this care would fall, I have some misgivings. However, the good would prevail. The sympathies of human nature are too strong for the spirit of theological systems.”

Chief among the temptations of modern society which seduced men into crime, Dr. Channing recognized intemperance. In common with all deep observers, he believed that the existing generation of civilized states is peculiarly subject to this vice, from the combined effects of extreme nervous development, — of restlessness and anxiety, engendered from worldly competition, — of exhaustion, produced by excessive and monotonous toil, — of defective social, intellectual, and physical excitements, — and, finally, of the depressing influence of general culture, contrasted with tantalizing inequalities of condition. With his habitual love of individual freedom, and his excessive dread of the tyranny incident to associated action, he refrained, indeed, from joining the temperance societies, and never adopted, or advised others to adopt, their pledges. But by precept and example he lent the full weight of his influence to the temperance reform, and, by addresses to his people and to the public, endeavored to unite all classes in a grand co-operative movement to put out, once and forever, the wasting fire that was eating up forest and prairie, cornfield and garden, the scattered village and the crowded city. The frankness and thoroughness with which he discussed the causes and cures of this terrible evil may be best learned from the address delivered, in 1837, before the Massachusetts Temperance Society.<sup>1</sup> But one or two passages selected from his manuscripts give interesting suggestions as to practical methods of advancing this reform; and from the last of these it will appear that he had anticipated, at least in hope, the sublime Washingtonian movement, which has wrought throughout our land such miracles of love.

1825. “In the spirit of these remarks, I beg to suggest a few means of preventing intemperance in the community. One means seems to me to be a greater attention to physical education, to the production of a vigorous constitution in our children. There is a puny, half-healthy, half-diseased condition of the body, perhaps more

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. II., pp. 301–346. One Volume Edition, pp. 99–116.

common in this country than in many others, which, by producing irritableness and restlessness, and weakening the energy of the will, is a strong temptation to the free use of stimulants, and many, I firmly believe, become sots through bodily infirmity. Physical vigor is not only valuable for its own sake, but it favors temperance, and all the virtues, by producing clearness and soundness of intellect, and by removing those indescribable feelings of sinking, disquiet, depression, which no man who has not felt them can possibly understand. Physical education needs more attention. The intellect, indeed, calls for chief care; but the mind is now lodged in matter, and acts through organs, and suffers and pines with them. A child owes little gratitude to the parent who gives him knowledge at the expense of health. Beware of sacrificing the body to the intellect, for they are intended to be friends and joint workers. Whilst you give your children languages and science and literature, strive to give, too, that strength of muscle which will enable them to turn these acquisitions to account. Let them not, in their first years, be instructed, as is too common, in close, unventilated rooms, breathing a tainted, unhealthy air, and let them not, at a later period, give up exercise for study. The body cannot be neglected with impunity; bad temper, discontent, and intemperance follow in the train of nervous debility. . . . .

“I am naturally led to another means of checking intemperance, which is, to extend the means of intellectual improvement among the laboring classes of society. This alone will not make men temperate, but it is an important aid. Many fall into drunkenness from want of interesting objects. Conceive of the number of young men in this town, who, unaccustomed to find a companion in a book, and having never given themselves to the culture or pleasures of intellect, have hardly any method of filling up the evening but by haunting public places, and taking up with such society as they can find. It is probably known to most of you, that in England, the mother of good inventions, exertions are now used, and with great success, to give to the laboring classes a degree of scientific knowledge of which they were once thought incapable, and which prepares them to follow their various trades more intelligently; and the intention is, to add instruction in history, political economy, morals, so that a laborer may soon know more than most gentlemen know at present. Now this is a most refreshing prospect. It is a resurrection of mind. And the good has begun in this country, in Philadelphia; and we may confidently hope that the mental vigor, foresight, self-respect, and innocent occupation gained by this process will snatch many a victim from intemperance.”



1833. "The chief objection to this reform seems to me to be this, that its leaders and friends have allowed themselves to speak despairingly of the recovery of those who have enslaved themselves to intemperance, and that, in their zeal to arrest this pestilence, to prevent its seizing on new subjects, they have thought too little of those who have already fallen under its power. In this respect, they need to be reminded of Him who came to seek and save the *lost*. We cannot be too slow to despair of a fellow-creature.

"It may be, that the very circumstance which makes intemperance so obstinate gives encouragement to labor for its cure. This vice is confirmed by nothing so much as by the disease which it generates in the animal frame. It has its seat in the body as truly as in the mind, — in the derangement of physical functions as much as in weakness or poverty of will. Accordingly I cannot but hope that asylums, or establishments in which a wise physical treatment should be combined with moral means, would do much for the salvation of this unhappy class of our fellow-creatures.

"There is one powerful motive for these efforts. The reformation of the intemperate man, when it does take place, is more complete than that of any other class of offenders. A man who has given himself up to revenge, pride, envy, anger, dishonesty, debauchery, is seldom, if ever, totally reformed. These vices get possession of the imagination, twine themselves into the common trains of thought, and act so subtly and deeply, that he who has once been their slave perhaps never, in this life, escapes wholly their influence. But examples are not rare of the drunkard becoming *wholly temperate*, and, what is very cheering, such a man, when reformed, returns to the generous feelings, the domestic affections, the innocent and refined tastes, and very often to the intellectual energy, which he seemed to have lost. I have seen among men reclaimed from this vice bright examples of moral worth and intellectual power. Intemperance, if cured rarely, yet admits of perfect cure; and this is more than can be said of the malignant and selfish vices. You can receive to your friendship and confidence a man reclaimed from intemperance. You never can trust entirely a man who has been given up to dishonesty, however he may seem to forsake his evil path. In like manner, a habit of lewdness leaves behind it a taint of grossness, pollution, from which the thoughts and imagination are never, perhaps, in this life, wholly cleansed. This advantage on the side of intemperance is owing, I believe, to the circumstance of its being a bodily even more than a moral or mental disease; and this view, while it diminishes its guilt, should encourage us to use every means of rescuing its victims from its power.

“The temperance reform which is going on among us deserves all praise, and I see not what is to hinder its complete success. If, indeed, this reformation stood alone, or if it rested only on the efforts of associations, I should have little hope of its continuance. No particular vice can be reformed alone; unless a general improvement go on in society, the attempt to root up this or that evil will avail little. The seeds of the evil will be left, and the general corruption will afford them the very soil in which to thrive, and they will certainly shoot up into rank luxuriance as soon as the effort for repressing them shall be slackened by time. In regard to intemperance, I believe the movements now made will succeed, because they are in harmony with, and are seconded by, the general spirit and progress of the age. Every advance in knowledge, in refined manners, in domestic enjoyments, in habits of foresight and economy, in regular industry, in the comforts of life, in civilization, good morals, and religion, is an aid to the cause of temperance; and believing, as we do, that these are making progress, may we not hope that drunkenness will be driven from society?”

Dr. Channing was not only desirous of surrounding the criminal and the intemperate with a genial atmosphere of respectful kindness, but he was yet more anxious that society at large should be pervaded with such a spirit of good-will and justice as would save men from temptation to debasement. He thought that no work of substantial, sure, progressive reform could be effected in the community, without establishing new relations between the more privileged classes and their less fortunate fellow-beings. He saw that no persevering, combined, faithful efforts were made to surround the vicious with good influences, but that they were left for the most part to herd together, and to corrupt each other amidst destitution and moral and mental darkness. What was needed first of all was that the partition-walls of classes and ranks should be broken down, so that the highest might meet the lowest as brethren, and a constant circulation of intelligence and virtue be kept up between the cultivated and ignorant, the pure and the unrefined, the wretched and the prosperous, the care-worn and the happy. He was convinced that all true charity must be directed, not so much to the relief as to the removal of pauperism, that foul common-sewer of civilization, from whose abominations steam up innumerable moral infections. These views led him to give his time and thoughts, his sympathy and counsel, and, in every way which feeble health permitted, his most earnest co-operation, to his friend Dr. Tuckerman, in establishing the Ministry at Large. His correspondence upon this subject will open to us the writer's cen-

tral principles and most cherished hopes in relation to Social Reform.

“If you can succeed in awakening in the more opulent and improved class an enlightened and active concern for the moral and religious improvement of their less favored brethren, will you not accomplish a greater good than by any other labors, and will you not afford, at the same time, the best illustration of the true spirit of Unitarian Christianity?

“We are distinguished by believing that Christ benefits and saves men exclusively by a moral influence, and that the true follower of Christ is he who is ready to live and die in the work of elevating the human soul, and especially of raising the most fallen. Is there any distinction which we are so desirous to communicate to our liberal fellow-Christians as this moral interest in mankind? And have you not encouragement to labor, that this may become a striking characteristic of the body whom, in a sense, you represent, as well as that it should be spread more and more through the whole community? It seems to me, that we understand better than most Christians that it is the object of our religion to establish a fraternal union among all classes of society, to break down our present distinctions, and to direct all the energies of the cultivated and virtuous to the work of elevating the depressed classes to an enlightened piety, to intellectual and moral dignity. To us, it seems to me, this great work peculiarly belongs. This high mission is given, because we understand better the worth of human nature in all classes, and are prepared to act on all with that sentiment of respect which is essential to success.

“I am particularly desirous that we should engage in this cause with a new spirit. I desire this, not only on the general grounds above stated, but for two reasons in particular.

“First, it seems to me that the signs of the times point to a *great approaching modification of society*, which will be founded on, and will express, the essential truth, that the chief end of the social state is the elevation of all its members as intelligent and moral beings, and under which every man will be expected to contribute to this object according to his ability. The present selfish, dissocial system must give way to Christianity, and I earnestly wish that we may bear our full part in effecting this best of all revolutions.

“In the second place, the time is come when religious bodies will be estimated by *the good they do*, when creeds are to be less and less the test of the Christian, and when they who labor most effectually for their fellow-beings will be acknowledged to give the



best proof of having found the truth. This is no reason for making forced, unnatural, sectarian efforts, and baptizing them with the name of philanthropy; but it is a reason why a body of Christians, distinguished by holding the true doctrine of love, and by understanding the true bond of society, should do most for their fellow-beings. . . . I wish that this may be an object in your tracts. I would ask, whether this object may not be distinctly recognized in the constitution of all auxiliary societies, and whether, indeed, it may not be made the leading trait of a Unitarian, that he is a man who sympathizes with, and respects, the less favored classes of society, and that he is pledged to use all his powers for their elevation. I am sure that, just in proportion as this spirit shall be spread among us, modes of operation, little thought of at present, will open upon us, and a new era of Christian exertion will commence.

"It is an important question, what sphere of useful action is particularly commended to us as Unitarians. We do not feel ourselves called to missionary labors. We find no sufficient field in societies which are instituted to remove particular evils, such as intemperance, slavery, war, &c. Is there no work to which our peculiar views call us, and for which they fit us? The success which has attended Dr. Tuckerman's labors, and the good which he has done to our body by awakening a fraternal sentiment towards all men, seem to me to furnish one answer to these questions. We ought to be by eminence CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPISTS."<sup>1</sup>

"*Newport, R. I., August 12, 1833.* My great desire is, not so much that the ministry for the poor should be made permanent, as that the spirit in which Dr. Tuckerman conducted his ministry should be fervently cherished and spread through our class and every class of Christians. He was distinguished by recognizing the capacities and claims of the poor as intellectual and moral beings. He did not go among them to teach them submission to their betters, but to teach that they were equally objects of the Divine love with the greatest of their race, and that their condition contained the means of the true happiness and glory of human beings. His reports were all fitted to give the poor a different place in the minds of the rich, and to break down the barriers which have hitherto separated these classes of society. What I desire is, that this respect for the poor, this spirit of brotherhood, this consciousness of the near relation sustained by all human

<sup>1</sup> To a committee of the Unitarian Association, appointed to consider and report upon the Ministry at Large.

beings to the Infinite Father, should be cherished and diffused among us with persevering and increasing zeal.

“The distinction which is still made in society by wealth is, perhaps, the strongest proof which can be named of the very limited efficacy of the gospel. Who, that looks on Christian communities, would suspect that their Divine Teacher had pronounced a blessing on the poor, and solemnly and most emphatically declared opulence to be one of the chief obstructions of human virtue and salvation? Who would suspect that he himself lived in poverty, and chose the chief and most illustrious ministers of his kingdom among the poor? Is it not undeniable, that the Christian spirit of humanity, of brotherhood, is resisted and repressed more by the prevalent estimate of wealth, than by almost any other cause? What I wish is, not only that a ministry may be established for the poor, but that it should spring from and should spread Christ’s spirit toward the poor, — that we should learn to look on and aid them, not as an inferior class, but as our brethren, — that this ministry should aim chiefly to give them true elevation of mind, to remove the idea of degradation from their outward lot, to teach them the reality of their immortal nature and its infinite preciousness in the sight of God, to teach them to regard and use their very sufferings as the means of rising to peculiar virtue, moral energy, and happiness. No outward lot is degraded, but that into which men fall by vice; and on this principle affluence is as often a degraded condition as poverty, for as many grow rich as grow poor by guilt. The superiority of human nature, of that nature in which the high and low, rich and poor, alike partake, to all outward, adventitious distinctions is the foundation on which Christian exertion rests; and piety and philanthropy cannot advance a step, but by a more profound and enlightened conviction of this truth. Happy that body of Christians which shall be characterized by this conviction!

“It has often been objected to our views of Christianity, that they are suited to the educated, rich, fashionable, and not to the wants of the great mass of human beings. This charge, could it be substantiated, would be a weightier argument against them than all others. We know it to be false; and yet why has it been urged? I do fear, that, as a body of Christians, we have given some ground for it, by having failed in so great a degree to recognize and manifest the distinguishing and celestial spirit of Christianity, the spirit of universal, all-comprehending love, of sincere respect for human nature, of peculiar sympathy with the destitute and exposed, and of patient, earnest labor for their spiritual elevation. Wanting this, we have had no effectual means of interesting the mass of

mankind. Other systems have found in terror, mystery, &c., the means of taking hold of the multitude. These we have justly rejected. But the true method of reaching human beings in every condition, that is, the manifestation of a brotherly concern for the multitude of men, the cordial recognition of our near connection with them as immortal children of our Heavenly Father, the acknowledgment of this bond as dearer, nobler, than any connection with the great and distinguished of this world, the expression of a strong faith in the capacities of indefinite improvement in every soul, the utterance of this faith and love in the native language of the heart, — this means of operating on the minds of men, which would prove all-powerful, we have very faintly used. How could we use it, when the spirit of Christ has been so faint in us? The prejudices of society, amidst which we were born and grew up, joined to our own ambition and selfishness, have cut us off from our fellow-creatures. Is it strange, then, that it should be said, that our views are not suited to their wants, and cannot interest them?

“These remarks will show what seems to me the first step towards spreading through our body the spirit which breathed through Dr. Tuckerman’s ministry, and which should originate and pervade this ministry everywhere. It is this. They whose office it is to spread this spirit must possess it themselves, must cherish it in their own breasts. The great obstacle to success is the want of fit ministers for the work, of men who have a true faith in the great purposes for which the poorest and the lowest of men were made, and who love them as brethren.”

“*Boston, March 6, 1837.* I take a great interest in the laboring classes, and I feel that a right religious impulse would do more to elevate them than anything else. There are among them choice spirits, and they seem to be exposed to peculiar temptations, for they furnish the principal harvests to the preachers of infidelity. Can they be taken hold of? Mr. Brownson, who came here to form a congregation out of that class, has not succeeded as well as I hoped; but this would not discourage me, because he has adopted a philosophical style not suited to them, and has had in view too much another class. He tells me that he has found among them more hatred of the rich than he expected, and very probably this may form one of their tendencies to infidelity. I have a strong impression that rational views may be so brought out as to interest deeply this class of society; and he who shall give full proof of this will render great service to the cause of truth and humanity.”



"*June 21, 1837.*<sup>1</sup> — wishes to form a congregation of workmen, to whom the church shall be a bond of strong union, who, beginning with religion, shall associate themselves for generous improvement, both intellectual and moral, and who shall act together to spread a spirit of improvement through their own class. I have long had this object at heart. I earnestly hope that he will enjoy sympathy and encouragement in this philanthropic work. Is there any other which has greater claims? Can we doubt what class of society should receive the most immediate aid?"

In these last extracts, it will be noticed, Dr. Channing speaks of the formation of a congregation of workingmen as an object which he had long had much at heart. He had observed modern society deeply enough to become convinced, that, unless some effective means could be used to establish in virtue, intelligence, and independent conditions the laboring classes, pauperism would constantly increase. Especially did he hope that the workingmen, if united in one strong body by religious principle and humane sentiment, would, through concerted wisdom, discern practical modes of attaining to their rightful position of cultivation, social honor, and political influence, without recourse to revolutionary outbreaks.

These views had led him to look with most lively expectation upon the plans of the Rev. O. A. Brownson, when, in 1836, he attempted to stay the tide of infidelity, which was then threatening to swallow up the workingmen's movement, and to form in Boston a "Society of Union and Progress." Well-meaning but timid conservatives all around him regarded this new manifestation of religious radicalism with suspicion, disgust, and ridicule; but Dr. Channing gladly recognized in it a promise of true social regeneration. Speaking of Mr. Brownson in a letter to a friend, he says: "I have great interest in him. I comprehend how, to such a man, the present social state should be full of deformity. I far prefer his morbidly sensitive vision to prevalent evils, to the stone-blindness of the multitudes who condemn him." With open purse and ready counsel he sought for several years to aid this project; and even after Mr. Brownson's energies were diverted from immediate practical ends to profound problems of philosophy and religion, Dr. Channing was so solicitous that the original plan of combining the laboring classes into a society of mutual education and general co-operation should be successfully carried out, that he seriously deliberated whether he should not, in concert with a young friend, undertake the establishment of a Free Church. Nothing but

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.

physical infirmity finally prevented the accomplishment of this design.

The lectures on Self-culture and on the Elevation of the Laboring Classes,<sup>1</sup> delivered in 1838 and 1840, contain the best expression of Dr. Channing's principles and aims. To a friend, who feared that these efforts were a waste and perversion of his powers, he wrote : —

“ You wish me to treat different subjects, and think that others may discuss Society. This remark would seem to show that I have not succeeded or done much for my end. That end has been to bring down the Highest to the apprehension of the most lowly, — to show how the Divine might mingle with and be brought out in common life and in every condition. Many cannot do this.”

Nothing, perhaps, which he ever presented to the public gave him such pure and abiding satisfaction, as these expressions of his profound regard for the hardly used, but ever more and more to be honored classes, from the root of whose patient industry springs forth the well-being of communities. These lectures were reprinted in Great Britain, and widely circulated among the overtaken operatives of that prolific kingdom ; and one day, when a letter of thanks had reached him from the Mechanic Institute of Slaithwaite, he said, with glowing countenance and beaming eyes, “ This is honor, this is honor.” On his table was then lying a letter, written by command of the monarch of one of the mightiest nations of Europe, to thank him for a copy of his writings ; but this heart-felt expression of gratitude, in the handwriting of a rough miner, moved him more deeply than the courteous praises of the great, the admiration of scholars, or even the warm appreciation of friends. It filled him with inexpressible joy to know that he had smoothed the wrinkles, dried the tears, new-strung the muscles of the toil-worn poor. The answer which he returned to this letter reveals his feeling.

“ Boston, March 1, 1841.

“ GENTLEMEN : — I received with great satisfaction your letter, communicating to me the resolution from the Slaithwaite Mechanic Institute. This proof of the kind reception of my Lectures by those for whom they were especially written, is very encouraging to me. I have long had a full faith that the laboring classes, so long depressed, must rise. The signs of this happier state of things are multiplying ; and you, who are probably younger than I am, may live to see a better age.

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. II. pp. 347-411 ; Vol. V. pp. 151-230. One Volume Edition, pp. 12-36 ; 36-66.

“ I have been much cheered by information of the progress of the Temperance cause in your country. Ardent spirits have been the curse of the laborer. He must seek safety and elevation in total abstinence. One of his first steps towards the dignity of a man, is to renounce what makes men brutes. If his self-respect cannot carry him to this point of self-denial, I have little hope of him. The people must learn to restrain and govern themselves, or they will be kept under the yoke, and used as mere tools. Government finds its reasons or pretexts for subjecting the multitude to excessive restraints in their ignorance, unruliness, and incapacity of self-control. Every mechanic institute, every institution for raising the people, should start with the standard of temperance.

“ I have also been cheered by hearing, that the recent efforts of a part of the laboring classes to maintain their claims by violence are more and more discouraged among you. Passion and force may pull down the government, but the laborer must be involved in the common ruin. To make yourselves felt, it is not necessary to rage and destroy. Your true strength lies in growing intelligence, uprightness, self-respect, trust in God, and trust in one another. These cannot fail to secure to you your just share of social privileges.

“ From what I have heard, I cannot but hope that the cause of the laboring classes is not to be dishonored and injured by the spirit of irreligion. It is amazing that men calling themselves your friends should rise up against Christianity, — a religion whose first teachers were taken from these classes, which has no respect of persons, which knows nothing of the distinctions of birth and wealth, which commands the strong to succor and lift up the weak, and which, as far as it is effectual, breathes mutual deference and mutual interest in all classes of society. It is under the cross that the battle of humanity is to be fought.

“ An essential means of elevating the working classes is a system of national education, having for its object, not to enslave the mind of the laborer, but to make him enlightened and efficient, at once able and disposed to discharge wisely his public and private duties. I trust the reproach is soon to be taken from your government, of withholding this most necessary good. This should be demanded by you with an importunity which will take no denial.

“ I earnestly wish success to the laborer's efforts for improving his outward condition. But he must not give himself exclusively to the outward. Good wages are not happiness. A man may prosper and still be a poor creature. On the other hand, in the most unprosperous condition, a man may do the work and secure



the great good of life. Outward circumstances are not omnipotent. Our minds may triumph over our lot. Under great social disadvantages, we still may endure and act as men and Christians. Our very thoughts may be made the means or occasions of signal virtues, and in this way may bring a peace and hope which no mere prosperity can give.

"I beg you to express my best wishes to the members of the Slaithwaite Mechanic Institute.

"Very truly, your friend,

"WM. E. CHANNING.

"MESSRS. JABEZ MEAL,

THOMAS SYKES,

JOHN FARLEY,

*Slaithwaite, near Huddersfield, England."*

Soon after Dr. Channing's death, the following affecting tribute was received from Mr. Meal, and shall here be recorded as one of the brightest memorials in this biography.

"It will be some relief, under your bereavement, to know that the good man never dies; he lives and breathes in our cottages; his work on Self-culture is the text-book of the young men of our land; the soul-stirring sentiments of that book are working a moral regeneration in this country, and I feel that Boston has given us another FRANKLIN, another guide to the regions of virtue."

In another letter, written about the same period with this reply to the miners, Dr. Channing has yet further exhibited his views in relation to the means of securing to the people their long-withheld rights.

"*Boston, March 31, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR:—I received your letter, and the publications accompanying it, with much sensibility. Such testimonies as you and some others have given to the influence of my writings are unspeakably precious rewards for the labors of my life. I thank you for the happiness and encouragement you have given me, and I feel myself bound by your affectionate communication to new exertions for my fellow-creatures.

"I have weighed your suggestion as to the good I might do by an address to the middle classes of your country, and I find my fears stronger than my hopes. It is hard for a man to understand a foreign country. Feelings and prejudices must be spared, of which he knows little or nothing. I fear, too, that any good effect

<sup>1</sup> To Hamer Stansfield, Esq., Leeds, England.

I might propose would be defeated by the appearance of presumptuousness in such an address. National jealousy is very unreasonable, and might refuse to be schooled by a foreigner. Let me add, that your partiality seems to me to exaggerate my influence. I state these difficulties, in the belief that you will see some weight in them.

“I read with much interest the pamphlet from the imprisoned Chartists. I rejoiced to find that they had seized on so many great and just views. Occasional extravagances were to be expected from such men, especially under what they deem persecution. I rejoice that they see so clearly that the laboring classes must rise from brutal intemperance and ignorance, if they would cease to be treated as brutes. They show, too, their sagacity in distrusting the education which would be given them by the mass of the aristocracy and clergy. It would be a servile one. Nothing would discourage me more than the success of the clergy in getting the education of the country into their hands. Religion, as it is called, would then become associated with old abuses and prejudices, and the spirit of reform would consequently become irreligious, so that not a few of the most active and generous spirits in the community would be found in the ranks of infidelity. Christianity has suffered from nothing so much as from its being seized on by the foes of human rights and social progress. It is plain, from the pamphlet you sent me, that the Chartists have no conception of the importance of true religion, and especially of its bearing on their own cause. They understand by Christianity, I fear, not what came from the poor, houseless, meek, sympathizing Prophet of Galilee, not what was taught from the fishing-boat and on the mountain, but what issues from cathedrals and mitred men, from a conservative corporation, whose sympathies are with ‘the powers that be.’ This misapprehension and want of religion threaten much injury to their cause. Religion, in the generous, not sectarian, meaning of the word, has this grand distinction from all human methods and systems, that, whilst it restrains, it elevates yet more. Without it, the struggles of the laboring classes for rights and dignity are anything but hopeful.

“It is from the free and enlightened spirits of the middle classes that help is to come to the Chartist. I therefore rejoiced in your Leeds meeting, as fitted to bring these two great divisions of society nearer. Nothing will soothe and tranquillize the Chartists like sympathy, like some proof that they are not abandoned by the more prosperous; and to tranquillize them is a great end. They can gain nothing by violence. Their progress, I fear, will be slow.

I do not doubt that your aristocracy is very far in advance of every other. But all possessors of exclusive privileges cling to them as to life, and hereditary rulers legislate first to secure their own power. Thus, the portion of society for whom government is especially established, and who ought to be its first objects, — I mean the poor and the weak, — are the last to share its benefits. This topic has carried me so far, that I can add nothing on others suggested by your packet. Let me renew my thanks to you, and assure you that I am very truly yours, &c.”

Dr. Channing's sympathies went freely forth to the toiling multitudes of every grade; and, among other injured classes, he was much interested in that noble body of men, whom the mean neglect of an intensely selfish commerce has so long kept down and mastered by a system of precarious support, excessive hardship, and brutalizing enjoyment, — the sailors. Feeling how much all nations are indebted to the courageous sacrifices of these generous and thoughtless beings, and what base returns are made to them for all their sufferings, he rejoiced in every attempt to secure to them comforts, refining influences, economical habits, intellectual and religious discipline, and an established position in society. Accordingly, when Father Taylor came to Boston, Dr. Channing was the first to give him efficient support, by heading the subscription list for his Bethel; and from that time forward till his death he encouraged every effort of the patriarch of seamen. He was delighted, when attending at the sailors' meeting, to watch the bronzed faces of the weatherbeaten tars now melt into tears, now brighten into smiles, while their sturdy forms swayed to and fro, as the heart-stirring eloquence of their wonderful preacher swept over them with alternate gales and calms. It was in the Federal Street Church that Father Taylor first pleaded the cause of his brethren before a crowded assembly of the most enlightened and munificent citizens of Boston; and, without disparagement to the many devoted friends who by heart and hand have for years upheld his noble enterprise, it may be truly said, that to no one was his gratitude more strong and constant than to Dr. Channing.

By the whole tone of his character, and his habits of thought, Dr. Channing was disposed to look less to changes in external condition, than to intellectual culture and moral development, for permanent reforms. This has plainly appeared from the letters already quoted. His great desire was to open to all men free opportunities for the highest spiritual refinement. A paper written for the “Reformer,” in 1837, very clearly and fully presents his views upon this subject.



“ON THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE, AND ESPECIALLY OF THE LABORING CLASS. — What is education? This is one of the watch-words, almost a cant word, of the day ; but few terms are so vague. It is said by the friends of the working classes, that their first great want is a better education. Let us try to understand what this is.

“The great end of education is not to train a man to get a living. This is plain, because life was given for a higher end than simply to toil for its own prolongation. A comfortable subsistence is, indeed, very important to the purpose of life, be this what it may. A man half fed, half clothed, and fearing to perish from famine or cold, will be too crushed in spirit to do the proper work of a man. He must be set free from the iron grasp of want, from the constant pressure of painful sensations, from grinding, ill-requested toil. Unless a man be trained to get a comfortable support, his prospects of improvement and happiness are poor. But if his education aims at nothing more, his life will turn to little account.

“To educate a man is to unfold his faculties, to give him the free and full use of his powers, and especially of his best powers. It is, first, to train the intellect, to give him a love of truth, and to instruct him in the processes by which it may be acquired. It is to train him to soundness of judgment, to teach him to weigh evidence, and to guard him against the common sources of error. It is to give him a thirst for knowledge, which will keep his faculties in action through life. It is to aid him in the study of the outward world, to initiate him into the physical sciences, so that he will understand the principles of his trade or business, and will be able to comprehend the phenomena which are continually passing before his eyes. It is to make him acquainted with his own nature, to give him that most important means of improvement, self-comprehension.

“In the next place, to educate a man is to train the conscience, to give him a quick, keen discernment of the right, to teach him duty in its great principles and minute applications, to establish in him immovable principles of action. It is to show him his true position in the world, his true relation to God and his fellow-beings, and the immutable obligations laid on him by these. It is to inspire him with the idea of perfection, to give him a high moral aim, and to show how this may be maintained in the commonest toils, and how everything may be made to contribute to its accomplishment.

“Further, to educate a man in this country is to train him to be a good citizen, to establish him in the principles of political science, to make him acquainted with our history, government, and laws, to teach him our great interests as a nation, and the policy by which they are to be advanced, and to impress him deeply with his respon-

sibilities, his great trusts, his obligations to disinterested patriotism as the citizen of a free state.

“Again, to educate a man is to cultivate his imagination and taste, to awaken his sensibility to the beautiful in nature and art, to give him the capacity of enjoying the writings of men of genius, to prepare him for the innocent and refined pleasures of literature.

“I will only add, that to educate a man is to cultivate his powers of expression, so that he can bring out his thoughts with clearness and strength, and exert a moral influence over his fellow-creatures. This is essential to the true enjoyment and improvement of social life. . . .

“This last topic suggests the true mode of educating the laboring classes. It is by *manual labor schools* that this great achievement of civilization and philanthropy is to cease to be a dream, is to become a reality. In no institutions have the laboring classes such an interest. A philanthropist who desires the happiness and honor of giving the most effectual spring to social progress cannot better employ himself than in studying, improving, and extending these. They are yet in their infancy, and need many experiments to determine the best modes of action. Let the workingman’s friend turn his mind to these.

“I have said the rich will repel all attempts to force them to the support of plans for universal education. If, however, the enlightened among the laboring classes, and their enlightened friends, will set in motion a system of improvement which promises good and great results, the rich will not be found wanting in sympathy and benevolent aid. They cannot and ought not to be driven; but many among them would contribute liberally and joyfully to any wise practicable effort for elevating the laboring classes. They must see, however, the practicableness of the scheme. Their scepticism must be overcome by seeing the mass of the people in earnest to improve themselves. Such efforts on the part of the many would be more liberally seconded by the philanthropy of the age than any benevolent project to which it is now pledged. Thus the union of all classes would be accomplished. All would labor together for the advancement of the human race.”

This paper shows how clear was Dr. Channing’s conviction, that “the great work of the age,” as he said in a letter to Sismondi, “is the diffusion of intelligence and enlightened religion through the mass of the people.”<sup>1</sup> And the following extracts will manifest the comprehensiveness of his desires and plans for pouring the

<sup>1</sup> See his Address on the Present Age. Works, Vol. VI. pp. 147-182. One Volume Edition, pp. 159-172.

fullest measure of illumination upon every class in the community, from the most neglected to the most privileged.

“GENTLEMEN:—The attention of the Association of Ministers in Boston and its vicinity has been called to the condition of children and young persons employed in manufactories. From the representations made to them of the neglected state of this very interesting class of the community, they resolved, if possible, to obtain information on the subject from different parts of the Commonwealth, and for this purpose addressed a circular letter to several ministers, within whose parishes manufactories are established. The answers to this circular have not been as numerous and definite as they had hoped; but still they have derived from them several hints which they consider useful, and which they respectfully submit to the honorable committee to which this subject is referred.

“We do not deem it necessary to enlarge on the importance of giving all possible efficacy to the wise provisions which this Commonwealth has made for extending the means of education to all orders of the community. The laws on this subject express the deep conviction which was fixed in the breasts of our ancestors, that the good citizen is to be formed in youth, and that free institutions are safe only in the hands of a people who have been trained to intelligence and virtue. Legislators cannot too solicitously guard against measures which tend to place any portion of the young beyond the reach of instruction, and to expose them to corrupting influences, which will almost necessarily unfit them for the duties of men and citizens.

“It is to be feared, that, without much care, effects of this unhappy character will be produced by the incorporation of manufacturing companies, and by the extension of manufacturing institutions; and it is conceived that legislative provision cannot too early be made to resist this spreading evil.

“It is well known that in these establishments a large proportion of the labor is performed by children and young persons. To some of these young persons it is a benefit that they are received into manufactories, as in this way they are taken from the streets, from beggary, and from idleness, and are early accustomed to exertions which procure them a comfortable and honest support. But a manufactory abounds in temptations, and, unless attention be given to their minds and morals, we have every reason to apprehend that their characters will be depraved, and that their future lives will prove not only ruinous to themselves, but most pernicious to the community.



“A child who enters a manufactory is generally removed from the care of parents, and from the restraints and meliorating influences of domestic life. He finds himself almost continually surrounded by numbers of his own age, among whom some have contracted bad habits, and are prepared to teach him the worst vices. His employment is made up of a constant repetition of movements which require little thought, and are very poorly adapted to unfold his faculties. Does not every intelligent parent immediately discern the tendencies of this mode of life, and feel the importance of counteracting them by instruction and moral discipline? Shall these children be abandoned to a degradation worse than death, in the bosom of a Christian community, and under a government which professes to respect the obligations of Christianity? . . . .

“It is, therefore, respectfully proposed that an act be passed, requiring that in each manufactory a convenient room be provided in which the children may be taught, and in which all the laborers, if removed to a distance from the place of worship, may receive such instruction as the minister of the parish may be able to give them; that in each manufactory, containing more than — children under the age of — years, a male and female teacher of good character be employed at least — months in every year; that during this period the children be permitted and required to attend school — hours each day; that the youngest children, at least, be taught in the daytime, and not in the evening, when they are too exhausted to receive instruction; and that, at all seasons of the year, certain portions of the day, or at least of Saturday, be allowed them for relaxation, that they may not be obliged to give up the Lord’s day to amusement.

“It is hoped that this subject will not be dismissed as unimportant. These children, it should be remembered, will one day be men and women, citizens and heads of families. They will influence the community while they live, and will transmit their character to the succeeding age. All wise legislators have felt the importance of education, and have laid the foundation of national prosperity in the good habits and principles communicated to the young.

“That judicious provisions on this subject will be beneficial to the proprietors of manufactories cannot be doubted. What better pledge of success can they have than the good character of those whom they employ? They will also be able to obtain children on more favorable terms, in proportion as parents shall lose their fear of the corrupting tendency of manufacturing establishments. It is,

therefore, hoped that the wisdom of the legislature will establish some general provisions for the object now proposed, an object which sound policy, humanity, and religion concur in recommending to their deliberate attention.”<sup>1</sup>

1825.<sup>2</sup> “The young men of the city may be divided into three classes.

“The *first* consists of young men of education, and the sons of opulent families, who may belong to what is commonly called the first class of society. We have reason to believe that the state of morals among these has decidedly improved within a few years. The standard of character is higher than formerly. . . .

“The *second* class consists of apprentices in stores and shops. The condition of these is, in many respects, unfavorable. It is believed that the sense of responsibility with regard to apprentices is not as strong in masters as formerly, and that they are less watched over. Another consideration is, that the greater part of them come from the country, and the change of residence is of itself no small trial to the character. On arriving here, they are placed in boarding-houses, where they are not held amenable to the heads of the family, but are left very much to themselves, and to one another’s influence. Most of them have no friends or relations in town, among whom they can pass their evenings and leisure time, and therefore resort to public places, and are more easily drawn into criminal pleasures. Many neglect public worship for want of accommodations in our churches. They cannot buy pews, single seats are not easily obtained, and Sunday is too often spent in riding, or reading novels, if not in less innocent employments.

“To meet these great evils, we recommend the following measures:—

“1. That a committee be appointed to visit and inspect the Apprentices’ Library, for the purpose of ascertaining whether it contains the best moral and religious books for readers of their age and condition, and of supplying what deficiencies may exist.

“2. It is thought very important, that in all our new churches a number of pews should be reserved; to be rented in single seats, and that pews offered for sale in the old churches should be turned to the same use. We believe that great good would be the result. So great is the respect for religious institutions here, that a young

<sup>1</sup> To a Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Committee appointed by the Wednesday Evening Association to consider the State of Morals among the Young Men of the City, and the Means of improving it.

man who has no place of worship feels that something is wanting to a good standing in society; and this motive, joined with higher ones, it is thought, would lead them to procure seats with eagerness.

"3. It is recommended that a Sunday evening lecture be instituted in winter, expressly for young men, and that a syllabus of the topics, — all of which shall be specially adapted to their condition, dangers, wants, &c., — shall be published. It is well known that some of the most important topics for this class of hearers cannot be discussed in a promiscuous assembly, and there is something particularly attractive in services intended for one class only.

"Another measure will be recommended under the next head.

"We now proceed to the *third* class of young men, consisting of the apprentices of mechanics, and the sons of laborers. The moral condition of these, we fear, is growing worse, rather than improving; and the cause is obvious. The free use of ardent spirits among their masters and fellow-laborers exposes them to strong temptation. Not a few of them, we suppose, come in for a share of the daily allowance of spirits made to workmen, and are thus trained to intemperance by regular indulgence. Accordingly, we know no method of benefiting these young men so important as to discourage the practice of giving a regular allowance of spirits to laborers.

"Another suggestion we would make is, that the committee already recommended should be instructed to inquire into the nature and operation of the institutions lately formed in Great Britain, and particularly Scotland, for giving lectures to young mechanics on the scientific principles of their various arts. It is said that these have awakened much interest, and promise to do much in calling forth the dormant intellect in the more neglected classes of society; and we may certainly anticipate a more beneficial result in this country than in Europe.

"The same committee may also inquire whether no interesting instruction can be given in the evening to the preceding class of apprentices, suited to prepare them for a more intelligent prosecution of business. Whatever will enlarge their minds and occupy their evenings will improve their morals."

"*May 13, 1834, Tuesday.*<sup>1</sup> Among the good signs of the times is the demand for better means of education. In this community we understand more and more that our kindness for our children cannot be expressed more wisely and effectually than by placing them under the best instruction. But we must not think that we

<sup>1</sup> To George Ticknor, Esq.



have fully discharged our obligations in this respect. The provision for education among us bears no just proportion to the wealth of our city. That more is done here for the instruction of the laboring classes than is done elsewhere may be granted, though our superiority on this point is not as indisputable as we commonly imagine. But who will pretend that the children of the more prosperous classes enjoy the means of as thorough and effectual a training of their intellectual and moral powers as their parents can afford and the progress of the age will admit? And yet it is our highest social duty to give the greatest advantages to our children. There is no use of property so sacred, so binding. To spend wealth in luxury and show, whilst the minds and characters of the rising generation are neglected, ought to be ranked among the greatest social crimes.

“Our College affords important means for training young men for the professions. But a much greater number of the young in the prosperous classes are destined to mercantile life, and for these no sufficient provision is made. Very many parents, who are unable or indisposed to give their children an education for a profession, are still able to afford them more extensive advantages than are now found in our schools; and to procure these advantages is among their first obligations. If any class of men should be well educated, it is the commercial. In this are found a very large proportion of our most opulent and influential men. None do more to determine public measures and to give a character to the community; and yet how little is now done to train up men of business for this high responsibility!

“Education has three great objects.

“The first is to store the mind with useful knowledge, by which we mean, not only such as will have a direct bearing on the business of life, but such as will be a foundation of further acquisitions of knowledge, and of a wise use of leisure, in all future years.

“The second, which is still more important, is to give force to the intellect; to give it the command of all its powers; to train it to labor, to concentration of thought, to patient and accurate investigation, to broad views of subjects, to the true methods of reasoning, and to soundness of judgment.

“The third and most important object is to fix those great principles of duty, and awaken those sentiments, which will insure the right and honorable use of the knowledge and the intellectual vigor of which we have spoken. We all feel that to quicken the mind of a child to this powerful and noble action is to confer the greatest good. We can conceive none greater.

“That our present schools do much good, in giving habits of order and industry to the child, is cheerfully granted. But they are designed for the first years of life, and dismiss the child before he becomes conscious of his powers, or can exert them vigorously on the most important subjects.

“It is believed that, after the training of our common schools, two years should, if possible, be devoted to the study of branches which have a direct tendency to task, strengthen, and elevate the mind. These branches are, — 1st. Natural history and philosophy; 2d. Civil history; 3d. Moral science, including both intellectual and moral philosophy; 4th. Politics, including the principles of government generally, and of our own constitution in particular, political economy, the true interests of our country, &c.; 5th. The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, and the general principles of interpreting the Scriptures.

“This course should be decidedly *philosophical*, that is, it should aim to lead the mind to the comprehension of great principles in every department; at the same time, it should have a *practical* character, by teaching how all knowledge may be applied to the formation of a virtuous character, and to the discharge of our duties as citizens and members of families, as related to the human race and to God. Two years’ faithful study of the branches now enumerated would not only store the mind with important truth, but would awaken new life and energy, and probably give a new character to the life.

“The question now comes, How shall this better education be given to young men not destined to the liberal professions?

“It has been hoped by some that this education may be given by Harvard University, which has an extensive apparatus, capable of teaching many more than are now benefited by it. Some have thought that the University might give in this city such a course of instruction as is needed. It has been thought by others, that, whilst the instruction is given in Cambridge, the young men may reside with their parents in town. Others, again, favor the plan of a new institution, designed expressly to prepare young men for mercantile life, and for a right use of the influence which commercial prosperity bestows. . . .

“There is a particular call for attention to this subject at the present moment. It is understood that the Corporation of the College are now deliberating on the question, whether the College, whilst especially devoted to the preparation of young men for the professions, may not also give a valuable education to those who are looking forward to other pursuits.”

“*June 10, 1834.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR:—The discussions of the last evening and the preceding showed very plainly that the only practicable method of improving our system of education at present is, to enlighten and excite parents, to lead them to feel what they can and ought to do on this point. I hope, therefore, that the result of these discussions will be the exhibition of our leading views to such parents as may be able and disposed to act on them. I have accordingly put these views on paper, and enclose them to you. It seems to me that, if a circular of this kind could be placed in the hands of men of business, who have children needing a better course of instruction, and especially if it should bear the signatures of the gentlemen who attended our meetings, an important step would be taken towards our object.

“I say a circular of *this kind*, for I have no desire that this paper should go abroad. It expresses, perhaps, the views of the writer in some respects more strongly than others might think expedient.”

“CIRCULAR.

“At a meeting recently held by a few gentlemen, chiefly engaged in commerce, to inquire whether provision cannot be made for the more liberal education of boys designed for active life, several views were taken, which it is thought may be usefully communicated to the public.

“It was the opinion of all present, that boys need not enter upon their apprenticeship in the counting-room before sixteen or seventeen years of age; that four or five years of apprenticeship, preceded by good instruction, are fully adequate to the preparation of a young man for business, and that, consequently, two or three very important years of life are now lost by the habit of beginning apprenticeship at the age of fourteen.

“It was the opinion of all, that gentlemen who declined to send their sons to college, as being an institution not suited to prepare them for active life, are bound to give them a better education than they now receive; and still more, it was believed that in general they are desirous to do it;—so that the suggestion of any practical method can hardly fail to be adopted by at least a sufficient number to insure a fair experiment.

“It was the opinion of all, that gentlemen having the means should not rest until they have provided for their children the most extensive and liberal instruction which is consistent with effectual preparation for their future calling; that the object should be, to

<sup>1</sup> To Hon. Nathan Appleton.



train and prepare them, not only for the acquisition of property, but for the intelligent and faithful performance of their duties as freemen, citizens, and heads of families, for the support of our public institutions, for a wise and honorable use of property, for the improvement of their minds according to their opportunities through their whole lives, and for the exertion of a salutary influence on public opinion and on all the great interests of society. It was thought that every man of property should educate his sons, as far as possible, to be decidedly useful members of the community, to contribute to its progress in knowledge, sound morals, and the elegant arts, and to bear a part in securing to us the honorable distinction of being an intelligent, well-principled, and highly civilized people.

“It is plain that an education suited to this end must comprise, among other branches, a more extensive teaching of the history, constitution, government, and interests of our country, and of moral science as applicable to commerce, and to all the relations of life, than is at present given in any of our institutions.”

1835.<sup>1</sup> “I suggested for consideration a means of making college more extensively useful, namely, the establishment of a regular course of instruction for those who do not incline or have not opportunity to study the languages, who do not wish to be trained for one of the professions, but who can command time and money, and have capacity, for a higher instruction than is given in any of our schools. I proposed that this course should extend through two years; that it should comprehend moral and political philosophy, political economy, the principles of our own government, and the physical sciences, and that the teaching in these branches should be as thorough as that now given in college.

“The present system at Cambridge seems to me very important, and I wish to extend, instead of narrowing it; but I feel strongly the importance and need of another course, which will be at once practical and philosophical, and which, by dropping the more ornamental branches, will not be too extensive for many now excluded from college. I believe that such a course would have an immense influence on those who should pass through it, and would do much to raise the intellectual character of the community. A young man who should spend two years in philosophical studies, in continuous investigation of the laws of moral and material nature, would become intellectually a new man. This systematical application of the mind for the acquisition of general principles is

<sup>1</sup> To Josiah Quincy, LL. D., President of Harvard University.

much more worthy to be called philosophical education than the study of language, and I wish that as many young men as possible may enjoy the benefits of it.

“The *education of the people* seems to me more and more to be the object to which the College should be directed. This institution has always existed, and exists now, for the people. It trains young men, not so much for themselves, as that they may be qualified to render services to the community; and perhaps they render no higher service than by spreading their own intelligence, and giving a higher tone to the public mind. Cannot the College do more for this end? I hope it may. If it can furnish a course of philosophical instruction which can be pursued by a greater number than now pass through college, if it can extend the demand for this higher education by supplying its means, and if it can give a rank to those who enjoy this advantage, it will render inestimable service to the community.”

1836. “I have long seen with much satisfaction the diffusion through our country of institutions for the intellectual culture of the people. I have rejoiced in the establishment of *lyceums* and popular lectures, and I feel that every one is bound to do what he can to forward these good works. By this I do not mean that I consider such institutions in the present form as fitted to meet all our wants. The lectures are too disconnected, and too generally intended for mere amusement, to stir up the minds of the hearers to any strong and enduring activity. But we must not despise the day of small things. A lyceum or young men’s association, though liable to the charge of giving superficial knowledge, is still a promise, a harbinger, of something higher. It is a sign that the people are beginning to hunger for more refined pleasure and increasing knowledge. It shows that intellectual life is at work, and spreading through the community. Such an omen I hail with joy. As a people, we have been, and still are, given too exclusively to outward goods, to accumulation of property, to general indulgence. We hardly seem to have discovered that we have minds of heavenly origin, and created for endless progress. The body, not the thinking soul, has been our care. Anything which shows that we are waking up to the greatness of our own spirits, and desire to improve them, is a good sign, and must be welcomed by every Christian and friend of his race. In this view, I rejoice to hear, as I travel, that lyceums and similar institutions are springing up in the land, and, if a good word will help them onward, no one is free to withhold it.

“At the foundation of every good institution there lies some

great idea, which ought to be understood. On what idea does your association rest? It is that of *human progress*, that of man's capacity of *intellectual growth*. Here, indeed, is the grand thought on which all religious, moral, and intellectual institutions rest. Your institution is undoubtedly established for the pleasure it will bring, and it is useful as offering an innocent recreation. But were this all, it would be of little moment. A consciousness of the greatness of the soul in every human being is the foundation of the lyceum."

But it was for the common schools that Dr. Channing felt the deepest and most anxious interest. On their success he saw that the fate of our free institutions in a great measure depends. Every effort to cleanse these fountain-heads of popular virtue and intelligence met, therefore, with his most cordial sympathy and uncompromising aid. And few events within his immediate neighborhood ever gave him such immediate and lasting joy, as when the Hon. Horace Mann resigned his high position in the political world, and, turning from prospects which would have bewildered the judgment of most men, consecrated his rare powers of heart and head to the cause of the education of the people. While partisans and worldlings smiled or scoffed at what seemed eccentric disinterestedness, Dr. Channing addressed to Mr. Mann the following brief letter of congratulation and encouragement.

"*Newport, August 19, 1837.* MY DEAR SIR:—I understand that you have given yourself to the cause of education in our Commonwealth. I rejoice in it. Nothing could give me greater pleasure. I have long desired that some one uniting all your qualifications should devote himself to this work. You could not find a nobler station. Government has no nobler one to give. You must allow me to labor under you according to my opportunities. If at any time I can aid you, you must let me know, and I shall be glad to converse with you always about your operations. When will the low, degrading party quarrels of the country cease, and the better minds come to think what can be done towards a substantial, generous improvement of the community? 'My ear is pained, my very soul is sick,' with the monotonous yet furious clamors about currency, banks, &c., when the spiritual interests of the community seem hardly to be recognized as having any reality.

"If we can but turn the wonderful energy of this people into a right channel, what a new heaven and earth must be realized among us! And I do not despair. Your willingness to consecrate yourself to this work is a happy omen. You do not stand alone,



or form a rare exception to the times. There must be many to be touched by the same truths which are stirring you.

“My hope is, that the pursuit will give you new vigor and health. If you can keep strong outwardly, I have no fear about the efficiency of the spirit. I write in haste, for I am not very strong, and any effort exhausts me; but I wanted to express my sympathy, and to wish you God-speed on your way.

“Your sincere friend.”

Dr. Channing's readiness to co-operate in Mr. Mann's labors as Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education was proved a few months afterward, when he attended a Convention for establishing a County Association for the Improvement of Common Schools at Taunton, and followed Mr. Mann's splendid and eloquent address with quite a long extemporaneous speech. A very imperfect newspaper report is the only remaining record of these remarks.

The views indicated in this speech led Dr. Channing to use all his influence to raise the profession of a teacher to its rightful position of honor in the community, and consequently he took every suitable occasion to aid the Normal Schools. How strong was his desire to prepare teachers fitly for their responsible function appears in the following letter.

“*Newport, August 24, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> I understand that a wish has been expressed that your letter to me on the Normal School at Lexington should be published. I wish it may be, and shall rejoice if others may read it with the same delight which it gave to me. Your picture almost realized the ideal I have formed of a school. The relation of parent and child between Mr. Pierce and his pupils is to me one of the most beautiful views of the institution, for it must be confessed that the ordinary connection between teachers and taught is anything but love; and where this is wanting, the intellectual development must be very defective. The unhappiness is, that the understanding nowadays works so little in union with the moral affections, that our schools and higher seminaries act so partially on the soul. The *precision* which, as you say, distinguishes Mr. Pierce's teaching, is of essential and special importance in a normal school. All of us who have been instructors know how much we failed, at first, from want of precise ideas on subjects which we thought we understood. We had to become learners, to bring our vague ideas to a new clearness, before we could make them tangible to our pupils.

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Mary T. Peabody.

“ But I will make no comments on your statement. It gave me new confidence in normal schools. I have felt, as you well know, a deep interest in their success, though perhaps you do not know all the reasons of it. I began life as a teacher, and my own experience has made me feel the importance of training the teacher for his work. I was not more deficient than most young men who pass through college. Perhaps I may say, without presumption, that I was better fitted than most to take charge of a school; and yet I look back on no part of my life with so much pain as on that which I gave to school-keeping. The interval of forty years has not relieved me from the sorrow and self-reproach which the recollection of it calls forth. . . .

“ But, indeed, does it not stand to reason, that, where all other vocations need apprenticeship, the highest of all vocations, that of awakening, guiding, enlightening the human soul, must require serious preparation? That attempts should have been made in the legislature to break down our normal schools, and almost with success, is one of the most discouraging symptoms of our times. It shows that the people will not give their thoughts to the dearest interests of society; for any serious thought would have led them to frown down such efforts in a moment. I rejoice that the friends of education are beginning to visit the Normal School at Lexington. I earnestly implore for it the blessing of Heaven.

“ With sincere affection, yours.”

While thus earnest to diffuse among all classes the means of intellectual culture, and to introduce a system of instruction adapted by its philosophical and practical character to form sound and capacious minds, Dr. Channing saw with regret the exceeding difficulty of securing moral development, the growth and discipline of the affections, in our schools and colleges, as at present conducted. He was most solicitous, therefore, to encourage every movement which was directed to calling into vigorous action the spiritual powers of children. The clear conviction, that health of conscience and will is the only sure source of inward strength and outward efficiency, made him look with the liveliest hope upon the methods of training adopted by Mr. A. Bronson Alcott, when, in 1834, that fine and much-misapprehended genius attempted, in a select school, to illustrate and verify his original views of human culture. The following letter shows with what sincere friendliness he watched an experiment so worthy of adequate trial, but so prematurely cut short by unjust impatience in the community.

“*Newport, August 24, 1835.*<sup>1</sup> I intended to write you a long letter, but my house is full of friends, who leave me no leisure. I thank you for your ‘Record,’ which I read with great pleasure. I have still doubts; but the *end* sought is the true one, and I earnestly desire that the experiment should be made.

“I want proof that the minds of children really act on the subject of conversation, that their deep consciousness is stirred. Next, I want light as to the degree to which the mind of the child should be turned inward. The free development of the spiritual nature may be impeded by too much analysis of it. The soul is somewhat jealous of being watched; and it is no small part of wisdom to know when to leave it to its impulses and when to restrain it. The strong passion of the young for the outward is an indication of nature to be respected. Spirituality may be too exclusive for its own good.

“I have suggested these difficulties in conversation, and repeat them here, not to discourage the experiment, but to insure its success. No one has more interest in it than myself. Mr. Alcott’s reverence for the spiritual is the *first* great qualification of a teacher, and I want it to be so combined with other qualifications, and so manifested, as to give a new tone to instruction. Your chapter on General Principles<sup>2</sup> interested me much. It is full of fine thoughts, but the lights are somewhat too scattered. Your great idea is stated without the requisite modifications. You set out from happiness, a dangerous point of departure, for the whole selfish philosophy has grown from the error of placing enjoyment before morality. But I have not time to say more.

“Let my remarks be a proof to you, not of my love of fault-finding, but of my deep interest in your work. I had a very agreeable visit from Mr. Alcott.”

From all the views thus presented of education, it will be seen that Dr. Channing had a perfect trust in the adaptation of the human intellect to truth. Reason in God and man he conceived to be essentially the same principle, and acknowledged that the universe, in all its laws of order, was exactly correlative to the Ideas of Divine Wisdom. Any check, then, upon freedom of inquiry and expression he looked upon with peculiar disgust and dread. This hatred of intellectual constraint, and confidence in the capacity of the public to discern light amidst even the grossest errors, showed itself in a manner that subjected him to no little

<sup>1</sup> To Miss. E. P. Peabody.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in the first edition of “The Record of a School.”



misunderstanding and abuse on one occasion, which may deserve, therefore, a special notice.

In January, 1834, Mr. Abner Kneeland — who, from being an Orthodox minister, had become successively a Universalist and an Unbeliever, and had established himself in Boston as the head of a society of “Free Inquirers,” and editor of their organ, “The Investigator” — was indicted at the Municipal Court. The indictment was for blasphemy, in having published in his paper of December 20th, 1833, *three* articles: — 1. A scurrilous extract from Voltaire, ridiculing the miraculous generation of Jesus; 2. An article declaring the practice of addressing prayers to God to be absurd; 3. A letter from the editor to the editor of the “Trumpet,” in which he says: —

“Universalists believe in a god which I do not; but believe that their god, with all his moral attributes, (aside from nature itself,) is nothing more than a chimera of their own imagination.”

On this indictment Mr. Kneeland was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. He appealed to the Supreme Court, and at the November term of 1835 the appeal was brought before Judge Wilde. When the case came on, Mr. Kneeland declined to admit, as on his previous trial, that he was editor of the *Investigator*, or any other facts necessary for the government to prove. The attorney-general, James T. Austin, not being prepared with his proof, proposed to Mr. Kneeland, that, if he would admit the authorship and publication of the *third* article, as just quoted, the government would not ask for conviction on the other two articles, but would use them only argumentatively, as illustrating the defendant's motive and intent in denying God. This proposal was accepted; but as Mr. Kneeland had no counsel, and was little skilled in legal proceedings, the first and second articles were not struck out of the indictment. This was unfortunate, as it served to complicate the case, when it came before the public through the newspapers, and prevented a sound and sober judgment upon its merits. But the authentic report of the proceedings at the trial plainly shows the understanding of all parties. The attorney-general said that “he relied on the passage quoted in the judge's report [‘Universalists believe in a god,’ &c.] to sustain the prosecution, the other words recited in the indictment being referred to only as explanatory of this particular passage, and as evidence of the motives with which it was written and published.”<sup>1</sup> Again he said, “The denial of God, whether in decent language

<sup>1</sup> Pickering's Reports, Vol. XX. p. 209.

or otherwise, is prohibited.”<sup>1</sup> And Judge Wilde makes this express and conclusive statement in his report: “I instructed the jury that the wilful denial of the existence of any God, except the material universe itself, would be a violation of the statute.” Mr. Kneeland was finally sentenced, in 1838, to two months’ imprisonment; and what he was convicted of, as undeniably appears by the instruction of the judge to the jury, was, that he had *wilfully denied the existence of God*.

Immediately after the conviction, Ellis Gray Loring, Esq., an earnest friend of freedom and opponent of oppression, determined, after consultation with Dr. Channing, Dr. Follen; and other like liberal-minded persons, to draw up a petition to the Governor of the State for the remission of Mr. Kneeland’s sentence. The petition, as amended by Dr. Channing’s suggestions, was as follows:—

*“To his Excellency, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:*

“The undersigned respectfully represent, that they are informed that Abner Kneeland, of the city of Boston, has been found guilty of the crime of blasphemy, for having published, in a certain newspaper called the Boston Investigator, his disbelief in the existence of God, in the following words:—

““Universalists believe in a god which I do not; but believe that their god, with all his moral attributes, (aside from nature itself,) is nothing more than a chimera of their own imagination.”

“Your petitioners have learned, by an examination of the record and documents in the case, made by one of their number, that the conviction of said Kneeland proceeded on the ground above stated. For though the indictment originally included two other publications, one of a highly irreverent, and the other of a grossly indecent character, yet it appears by the report, that, at the trial, the prosecuting officer mainly relied on the sentence above quoted, and that the judge who tried the case confined his charge wholly to stating the legal construction of its terms, and the law applicable to it.

“In these circumstances, the undersigned respectfully pray that your Excellency will grant to the said Kneeland an unconditional pardon for the offence of which he has been adjudged guilty. And they ask this, not from any sympathy with the convicted individual, who is personally unknown to most or all of them; nor from any approbation of the doctrines professed by him, which are believed by your petitioners to be as pernicious and degrading as they are false; but—

<sup>1</sup> Pickering’s Reports, Vol. XX. p. 211.

“ Because the punishment proposed to be inflicted is believed to be at variance with the spirit of our institutions and our age, and with the soundest expositions of those civil and religious rights which are at once founded in our nature, and guaranteed by the constitutions of the United States and this Commonwealth ;

“ Because the freedom of speech and the press is the chief instrument of the progress of truth and of social improvements, and is never to be restrained by legislation, except when it invades the rights of others, or instigates to specific crimes ;

“ Because, if opinion is to be subjected to penalties, it is impossible to determine where punishment shall stop ; there being few or no opinions in which an adverse party may not see threatenings of ruin to the state ;

“ Because truths essential to the existence of society must be so palpable as to need no protection from the magistrate ;

“ Because the assumption by government of a right to prescribe or repress opinions has been the ground of the grossest depravations of religion, and of the most grinding despotisms ;

“ Because religion needs no support from penal law, and is grossly dishonored by interpositions for its defence, which imply that it cannot be trusted to its own strength and to the weapons of reason and persuasion in the hands of its friends ;

“ Because, by punishing infidel opinions, we shake one of the strongest foundations of faith, namely, the evidence which arises to religion from the fact, that it stands firm and gathers strength amidst the severest and most unfettered investigations of its claims ;

“ Because error of opinion is never so dangerous as when goaded into fanaticism by persecution, or driven by threatenings to the use of secret arts ;

“ Because it is well known, that the most licentious opinions have, by a natural reaction, sprung up in countries where the laws have imposed severest restraint on thought and discussion ;

“ Because the influence of hurtful doctrines is often propagated by the sympathy which legal severities awaken towards their supporters ;

“ Because we are unwilling that a man, whose unhappy course has drawn on him general disapprobation, should, by a sentence of the law, be exalted into a martyr, or become identified with the sacred cause of freedom ; and, lastly,

“ Because we regard with filial jealousy the honor of this Commonwealth, and are unwilling that it should be exposed to reproach, as clinging obstinately to illiberal principles, which the most enlightened minds have exploded.”



The name of William Ellery Channing stood first upon this petition when presented, followed by one hundred and sixty-seven others. It was made known to the public through the newspapers, and most bitterly attacked. A remonstrance against the petition was prepared and extensively signed. And, to conclude this brief history of the affair, the petition was rejected by the Governor and Council. But, nevertheless, it exerted a wide and permanent influence. It was an assertion by Christians of the equal rights of atheists to freedom of thought and speech. It did a good work in educating the public mind. And there will never, in all probability, be another prosecution for atheism in Massachusetts. Dr. Channing's views are very simply exhibited in the following letters.

“*March*, 1838.<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR:—I should have noticed your letter relating to Kneeland's case earlier, had I obtained the information which I have thought necessary. I have not yet gained it, but write a line of acknowledgment, that you may not think me indifferent to the matter. My impression is that Kneeland was not convicted for his opinions, but for assailing, in obscene and contumelious language, the opinions which are most dear and sacred to all around him. I thought his offence lay wholly in indecent and insulting scoffs. My intention is to see and converse with Judge Shaw on the subject. That a man should be punished for his opinions would be shocking, — an offence at once to the principles and feelings of the community.

“I have always thought, that, in petitioning for a pardon, we are bound to inquire whether the Executive has a right to pardon. I suppose this power to be given to the Governor to meet cases of crime which are accompanied by peculiar circumstances of mitigation, and not for the suspension or virtual repeal of an unjust law. The law must be executed, unless something peculiar in the case calls for the pardoning power. On this principle, I should doubt the propriety of petitioning. You understand this subject better than I do, and I should like your views.

“Very truly, your friend.”

“*Newport*, *July* 1, 1838.<sup>2</sup> I see Kneeland's case is making a noise. I expected that much offence would be given, and of consequence am not troubled. In these cases I feel that no man can harm me, but by impairing my love to him, by inspiring bad feelings. It is a comfort to me to find that I can be reproached without any desire to reproach, without casting off the injurious man. I have, as I think, an increasing compassion for those portions of

<sup>1</sup> To Ellis Gray Loring, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

society which I am called particularly to oppose. I see more and more how little they comprehend the spiritual life which Christ came to give, how rooted they are to the earth, how swallowed up in the outward, how blind to the true dignity of the human soul; and I would cheerfully spend and be spent for their recovery to a better mind. I wish to sustain a hostile relation to no human being. As to human favor, I feel more and more that it must be given up. If I know Christianity, it is so at war with the present condition of society, that it cannot be spoken and acted out without giving great offence. The want of the Christian spirit, of Christ's spirit, towards our fallen fellow-creatures is most mournful. I would drink of it more freely."

The same determination to uphold perfect freedom of opinion and expression showed itself in Dr. Channing's mode of action, when the distillers and traders in intoxicating drinks attempted to silence the Rev. John Pierpont, or to expel him from Hollis Street pulpit. "Sir," said he to that brave, resolute, and skilful champion for temperance and freedom, at the time of his most fiery trial, "should this struggle in your society result in some ten or a dozen of your most active opponents withdrawing from your church, and in others who sympathize with you and sustain your course taking their places, Hollis Street pulpit will stand the highest in the city." The following considerate and respectful, yet frank, letter was addressed to Mr. Pierpont at the time when the vote passed by a majority of the "proprietors of the pews," requesting Mr. Pierpont to take up his connections with the Hollis Street Society, had been reversed, and when he was about resuming his duties. It is as beautiful a tribute of Dr. Channing's regard for a much-injured brother, as it is a valuable memorial of his own magnanimity.

"*Friday Evening, November 15, 1839.* MY DEAR SIR:—I have taken much interest in the conflict you have recently gone through, and rejoice that you are to return to your pulpit under circumstances so encouraging and honorable. On the next Sunday I suppose that you will address, not only your own congregation, but a multitude, who will be drawn together by the peculiarity of the occasion; and will you allow me to say, that I trust that the services will breathe such a spirit of philanthropy and piety, and such a calm reliance on great principles, as will satisfy all that personal triumph has not been your aim, but that you have been and are truly devoted to the highest good of the congregation and the community. I wanted to call upon you, but am detained by a cold, which has almost taken away my voice. I write, because I feel that you are

to exert an important influence, and I have an earnest desire that it should be for good. I hope that these suggestions may not seem unreasonable. If they should, you will at least allow me to express my gratitude and respect for your courage and fidelity in a noble cause. Very sincerely, your friend."

One reason for Dr. Channing's earnest desire to uphold Mr. Pierpont's hands in the Hollis Street controversy was, that he saw in the persecution of that honest preacher by a band of moneyed men, allied by interest, an exhibition of tendencies which were everywhere working throughout modern society. It was very clear to him, that the danger was pressing of a complete subservience of politics, the press, public opinion, and the pulpit to the insidious tyranny of wealth. The predominance of the commercial and fiscal spirit over moral enthusiasm, spiritual aspiration, humane sentiment, and intellectual freedom, was, in his view, a most alarming symptom of the mad fever after money with which the whole age was sick. His tone of thought upon this subject may be best learned from the following letters.

"*St. Croix, March 17, 1831.* I was a little disappointed at finding that you set down the idolatry of wealth as the besetting sin of Philadelphia. I thought there was more of the old-fashioned aristocracy in that city, and that birth weighed more than money. I am glad you feel so distinctly and strongly the degraded condition of what are called the highest classes. Amidst some refinements of manner, they are so wanting in elevation of sentiment, in perception of spiritual excellence, in the consciousness of their solemn obligations to the less favored classes of society, that it is time for the friends and ministers of enlightened religion, laying aside equally all flattery and all bitterness, to seek their reformation by every instrument of persuasion, reasoning, and heart-searching reproof. I hope you will make no compromise with wickedness in high places. There it is intrenched, and thence a pestilential influence spreads through the whole mass. I write too fast to weigh my words; but I am not in a cynical fit; I give you my deliberate convictions."

"*July 12, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> The darkest spot in the aspect of your country is the depressed, half-famished state of your lowest classes. This may be relieved by the new impulse given to manufactures and trade; but I fear that it is not an *accident* of your system, but a *necessary effect* of your present artificial state of society, and that it will soon recur again. If this be so, great changes should be made

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.



in society to avert it. To communicate the intelligence and blessings of the higher classes to the lower should be the end and sure result of all social institutions, and they are essentially defective where such is not their operation. I am a leveller; but I would accomplish my object by elevating the low, by raising from a degrading indigence and brutal ignorance the laboring multitude. If I know what Christianity and philanthropy mean, they teach no plainer lesson than this."

"*Boston, September 6, 1835.* The cry is, 'Property is insecure, law a rope of sand, and the mob sovereign.' The actual, present evil,—the evil of that worship of property, which stifles all the nobler sentiments, and makes man property,—this nobody sees; but appearances of approaching convulsions of property,—these shake the nerves of men, who are willing that our moral evils should be perpetuated to the end of time, provided their treasures be untouched. I have no fear of revolutions. We have conservative principles enough at work here. What exists troubles me more than what is to come.

"We must not, however, be unjust to the present. In our body of Christians I certainly see higher modes of thinking and feeling than formerly, and there is a good deal of the spirit of religion in the community. Unhappily, sectarianism prevents the religion of the country from exerting its just influence. There is such a dread of its becoming a usurper, that it is not allowed to speak in public affairs. Still, if it lifts the minds of any number above sordidness and selfishness, it will prove itself to be a redeeming power. What offends me most is the wisdom which scoffs at all attempts to improve society, derides freedom, and wraps itself up in epicurean ease. I have inflicted quite a dissertation on you."

"*Boston, April 3, 1837.*<sup>1</sup> I have heard of your lectures, and beg you to carry into effect your purpose of publishing. I think the people are open to good impressions, though, undoubtedly, the last triumph of Christianity will be over the spirit of accumulation.

"I am sometimes almost tempted into the literal construction of the Christian precepts on this subject. It would be better for the world to be somewhat pinched for food and clothing, through an exaggerated spirituality, than to contract their whole souls into money-getting.

"I wish I could write you very encouraging accounts of our intellectual and moral condition. The whole mind of the country seems absorbed in its pecuniary interests, and, though active enough in this sphere, is not acting very beneficially. I feel more and

<sup>1</sup> To Orville Dewey, D. D.

more how little Christianity is applied to life. Its views of life, of property, of the end of human existence, of the relations between man and man, — how little are they understood! We ought not to be satisfied with our present modes of operation. No sect can boast of doing much."

1839. "The rich man has no more right to repose than the poor. He is as much bound to labor as the poor; not to labor in the same way, but to labor as really, as efficiently, as intensely. I am tempted to say more intensely, because he has a sphere so much wider and nobler opened to him. No man has a right to seek property in order that he may enjoy, may lead a life of indulgence, may throw all toil on another class of society. This world was not made for ease. Its great law is action, and action for the good of others still more than for our own. This is its law, and we violate it only to our own misery and guilt."

Dr. Channing's keen perception of the corrupting influences which the universal thirst for gain is exerting upon the whole of Christendom, and each Christian community, made him look with sympathizing respect, though with anxious scrutiny also, upon every movement that promised to introduce more just relations of industry and property. His hopes and fears are plainly enough presented in the following letters.

"*St. Croix, April 6, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> I have not seen a poor man. Slavery and pauperism do not live together. I have thought this view of slavery favored Owen's social system, for the two have some common features. The slaves are fed from a common stock, work on common ground, have their labors assigned by a superintendent. The differences are, that Owen's superintendent is a select committee; here it is a master; and according to Owen the whole community share alike, whilst here the master monopolizes almost everything.

"The wrongs of slavery are, indeed, infinite; and yet such are the effects of joint labor and of a common stock, that the large population of this little island — say twenty-five thousand, over a surface twenty-eight miles long and six broad — are fed and clothed sufficiently well for labor and health. The system, bad as it is, excludes paupers. The orphans, the old, and the sick — making with the children one third, perhaps — are as well supported as those who labor.

"I do not approve Owen's means; but his end, which is to insure the comforts of life to every member of society, and to do this by

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

moderate labor, is earnestly to be desired. He would accomplish it by merging the individual in the community. I would do it by increasing the power of the individual, including in this term moral even more than intellectual power, though the last is essential. I confide less and less in artificial arrangements, and have little hope but from the diffusion of intelligence, energy, disinterestedness, sympathy, and self-control, through the mass.

“Accordingly, I look on you as a most useful laborer in the vineyard. Go on; be strong in body and mind, and prosper. You will now ask what I am about? I have done very little, though I have not been idle. My thoughts turn much on the state of the world. That a new era is opening on us, or that the fuller development of the present is before us, we cannot doubt. I wish I could help men to understand the present age, that they might co-operate with its good tendencies and withstand its evil ones. But this is a great work.”

“*Boston, March 31, 1832.*<sup>1</sup> I find you attach some importance to St. Simonism. I have regarded the system as chiefly political; and in this view it is a serious matter. It shows, as does Owen’s system, and the co-operative system, that the old principles of property are to undergo a fiery trial, that the monstrous inequalities of condition must be redressed, and that greater revolutions than the majority have dreamed of — whether for good or evil — are to be anticipated. The religion of St. Simon, as far as I know it, is of little worth. The very notion of a hierarchy shows his childishness on this subject. It is impossible that he can connect religion with social duty as closely as Christianity does; for it is impossible for any system to connect man with God as this does, and no substantial social improvement can take place till this connection is understood.”

“*Boston, February 27, 1841.*<sup>2</sup> MY DEAR SIR: — I received your ‘Constitution and Exposition’ yesterday, and my early reply will prove my interest in your proposed ‘Fraternal Community.’

“Your *ends, objects*, seem to me important. I see, I feel, the great evils of our present social state. The flesh predominates over the spirit, the animal over the intellectual and moral life. The consciousness of the worth of the human soul, of what man was made to be, is almost wholly lost; and in this ignorance all our social relations must be mournfully defective, and the highest claims of man very much overlooked. I earnestly desire to witness some

<sup>1</sup> To William Burns, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> To the Rev. Adin Ballou, Mendon, Mass.



change, by which the mass of men may be released from their present anxious drudgery, may cease to be absorbed in cares and toils for the body, and may so combine labor with a system of improvement that they will find in it a help, not a degrading burden. I have for a very long time dreamed of an association, in which the members, instead of preying on one another, and seeking to put one another down, after the fashion of this world, should live together as brothers, seeking one another's elevation and spiritual growth. But the materials for such a community I have not seen. Your ends, therefore, are very dear to me.

“How far you have adopted the best *means* of realizing them, and whether they can be realized in the present low condition of individual Christians, are different questions, and most men would give a negative answer. I do not, however, discourage any sincere efforts for social or individual improvement, but would say, God speed you! There is a tone of faith and sincerity in your document which gives me hope, and yet I cannot say that I am without fear. I have lived so much out of the world of business, I have had so few connections with society except those of a religious teacher, that I cannot judge of the obstructions you are to meet. The grand obstacle to success, however, I do understand, and you ought to look at it fully. It consists in the difficulty of reconciling so many wills, of bringing so many individuals to such a unity of judgment and feeling as is necessary to the management of an extensive common concern, — in the difficulty of preventing the interference, intermeddling, harsh-judging, evil-speaking, self-will, jealousies, exactions, and love of sway, which scatter discord and woe through all our social relations. The Catholics have provided against these evils in their religious communities, by establishing an absolute power, and teaching the members that the first duty is obedience. Whether sufficient unity can be preserved in a free institution, built on the foundations of brotherhood and equality, remains to be proved. I wish you to try it, and, in order to success, I wish you all to look the difficulty in the face, and to feel that it is indeed a great one, — to be overcome only by habitual self-denial, by the special culture of humility, meekness, and charity.

“There are undoubtedly dangers attending every social condition. These we are to understand, that we may watch against them. The evils to be feared in a community like yours are, the loss of individual energy in consequence of dependence on the community, the increased facility given to the sluggish of throwing the burden of toil on their better-disposed brethren, the relaxation of domestic ties in consequence of the virtual adoption of the children

by the community, the diminution of free thought and free action, in consequence of the necessity of conforming to the will of the majority or the intendant, the tendency to narrowness and exclusiveness, and the tendency to a dull monotony of mind and life in consequence of confinement to a few influences. These evils are not imaginary. There is danger of losing in such establishments individuality, animation, force, and enlargement of mind. Your security must be sought in carrying out the principles of freedom and philanthropy to which you attach so much importance.

“I am aware of the many economical advantages arising from the gathering of the community into one habitation; but there are disadvantages. There is reason to fear that families will not be sufficiently separate, and that the domestic feelings may thus be impaired; and, perhaps, still more, that individuals will lose that spirit of solitude, retirement, secret thought and secret piety, without which social relations are full of peril, and the character loses strength and dignity. These dangers seem to me to require distinct guards.

“I should have been pleased to see in the articles some recognition of the importance of courteous manners. The importance of these, in keeping alive mutual respect and kindness, is great. In this country we suffer much from coarseness of manner. Refinement, mutual deference, delicacy in intercourse, are among the fruits of Christianity, and very needful in such a gathering as you propose. If I were to visit a community, and see the floor defiled by spittle, I could not easily believe that the members respected one another, or that, with such violations of neatness and decorum, there could be much aspiration for inward purity. Just in proportion as Christians come to recognize in one another the spiritual, immortal children of God, an unaffected deference will mark the tones of the voice and the manners, and the reaction of this deference on the sentiment from which it springs is very great. Where such deportment prevails, there will be no difficulty about reproof. Kind, courteous reproof, which is seen and felt to come from love, does not wound. Indeed, in such a society there will be little to reprove.

“I trust that this letter will be a testimony of my sincere interest in your movements. I pray God to bless you. I should die in greater peace, could I see in any quarter the promise of a happier organization of society. I am burdened in spirit by what I see. May the dawn of something better visit my eyes before they are closed in death!

“When you visit Boston I shall be glad to see you.

“Your friend and brother.”

“*July*, 1841. Perhaps no part of your letter gave me more pleasure than your account of Mr. Alcott. He little suspects how my heart goes out to him. One of my dearest ideas and hopes is the union of *labor* and *culture*. The present state of things, by which the highest and almost the only blessings of life are so often denied to those who bear its heavy burdens, is sad, and must be changed. I wish to see labor honored, and united with the free development of the intellect and heart. Mr. Alcott, hiring himself out for day-labor, and at the same time living in a region of high thought, is, perhaps, the most interesting object in our Commonwealth. I do not care much for Orpheus in ‘*The Dial*.’ His flights there amuse rather than edify me; but Orpheus at the plough is after my own heart. There he teaches a grand lesson; more than most of us teach by the pen.

“As to Mr. Brownson, you know how deeply I sympathize with him in his feeling towards what he calls the ‘*masses*,’ — an odious word, as if spiritual beings could be lumped together like heaps of matter, — but I have little patience with his article.<sup>1</sup> In regard to the workingmen, — including farmers, mechanics, domestics, and day-laborers, — he exaggerates their hardships in this country. In truth, it may be doubted whether they have not the easiest lot. Take our young lawyers and physicians, and see their struggles, disappointments, and the difficulty of establishing themselves in their professions. See nine out of ten merchants failing, perhaps again and again. Look at our young women, as well as those in advanced life, who are reduced to dependence by the decline of their families. Look at the literary class everywhere. In what other class have so many been starved? How few in the laboring classes have suffered more than you have done! At this moment, who suffers more than —, toiling for her family in her state of health? Your father, too, in a profession, finds it as hard to get work as any laborer in the streets. How often have I known professional and mercantile men toiling anxiously through the night, and sacrificing health, whilst the laborer has been wrapt in oblivion of all his cares! The truth is, that as yet life is a conflict. I expect it to be so hereafter. My own constitution was broken by early toils. We all have a hard battle to fight. To me the matter of complaint is, not that the laboring class want physical comforts, — though I wish these to be earned by *fewer hours* of labor, — but that they live only for their physical nature; that no better justice is done to their souls; that in early life they receive so few quickening influences; that labor is a badge of inferiority; that wealth

<sup>1</sup> The first on the Laboring Classes.



forms a caste ; that the multitudes are cut off from communications which would improve intellect, taste, manners ; that the spirit of brotherhood does not bind different conditions together."

Thus does it appear how deliberate were Dr. Channing's expressions, how weighty with conviction his words, when, in the Preface to the third Glasgow edition of his works, he thus summed up his creed as a social reformer.

1839. "These volumes will show that the author feels strongly the need of deep social changes, of a spiritual revolution in Christendom, of a new bond between man and man, of a new sense of the relation between man and his Creator. At the same time, they will show his firm belief, that our present low civilization, the central idea of which is wealth, cannot last forever ; that the mass of men are not doomed hopelessly and irresistibly to the degradation of mind and heart in which they are now sunk ; that a new comprehension of the end and dignity of a human being is to remodel social institutions and manners ; that in Christianity, and in the powers and principles of human nature, we have the promise of something holier and happier than now exists. It is a privilege to live in this faith, and a privilege to communicate it to others. The author is not without hope that he may have strength for some more important labors ; but if disappointed in this, he trusts that these writings, which may survive him a little time, will testify to his sympathy with his fellow-creatures, and to his faith in God's great purposes toward the human race."

Seeing thus clearly that a radical reform was near at hand which would transform the past relations of capital and labor and the prevalent usages of caste and privilege, Dr. Channing looked forward with serene and unfaltering trust. Let this chapter close, then, with the bright prophecies of this watcher on the mountains.

"*Boston, July 29, 1836.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR:—You write of the agitation and excitement in your country. I look on this state of things in the Old and New World calmly, not only from a general trust in Providence, but from considering the causes of excitement. It is the progress of intelligence, arts, wealth, and especially the waking up of men to the rights of human nature, to which we are to ascribe the present heaving agitation of society. That there are perils in such a period we see. Men open their eyes to discover great abuses, and learn their rights only to learn how they have been trodden under foot. They have the presentiment of a better state of things, and imagination finds on this extravagant expect-

<sup>1</sup> To Wm. Rathbone, Esq., Liverpool.

tations, which it burns to realize in a moment. Here are dangers, but it cannot be that the development of the highest powers of human nature can ultimately prove anything but good. I rejoice, — not indeed without trembling, — but still rejoice.”

“*July, 1838.*<sup>1</sup> My work of this kind, I hope, is over. Not that I think of repose; the longer I live, the more I have to do; but other fields of labor are open to me. We live in glorious times in one respect. Was there ever so much to do? Our age is a revolutionary one in the best sense of the word, — not of physical, but moral revolution. Higher ideas of the social state, and of human perfection, are at work. I shall not live to see the harvest, but to sow in faith is no mean privilege or happiness. Ever your friend.”

“*Newport, August 10, 1838.*<sup>2</sup> — says, you and he have talked about a newspaper. If one is started, I hope it will take the right ground. It must not be a party paper. Its great object must be to maintain *freedom*, and to promote *progress*. Its object must be to spread the spirit of our free institutions, to vindicate them from reproach, to show their claims to confidence, to breathe into the young a generous devotion to them, to resist encroachments on them by whatever party, to plead for the people, to uphold the rights of every injured and oppressed man, be he who he may, to encourage plans for the elevation of the many, to bind together in fraternal union all conditions and classes, and to awaken sympathy with all efforts for liberty, with the friends of humanity everywhere. We want a new tone, that of universal justice and philanthropy, to characterize the paper. I know the question is, whether such a paper can find support. If ably conducted, it would. If conducted no better than other papers, it would fail. For myself, I trust that a new body is growing up amongst us, of men of principle, who, if gathered together, would be strong enough to command respect from the selfish parties which divide the country, and who would thus act powerfully on public affairs. Can nothing be done to make them known to one another, and to give voice to their conviction?”

“*Newport, September 23, 1839.*<sup>3</sup> The present is a new era, and there must be jarring, till the new and the old have had time to adjust themselves to one another. The new spring given to human activity, the new connection of nations, the new sense of power in the mass of the people, these and other elements of our present condition must be accompanied with a good deal of trouble, till we have got used to them, and learned how to manage them. The wisest of us are poor prophets in such a transitional state of

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> To George Ticknor, Esq.

things ; but it is easy to see some grand elements at work. I cannot doubt that the impression of present evils is very much increased by that new feature of society, *publicity*. Now we know everything done and suffered, and know the worst. What a dark veil covered the woes and crimes of the past !”

“ *September 10, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> The late untoward events to which you refer do not discourage me as much as they do you. I expect the people to make a great many mistakes. It seems the order of Providence that we should grow wise by failures. Sometimes we learn the true way by having first tried every wrong one. I see vast obstacles to be overcome. To reconcile freedom and order, popular legislation and an efficient executive power, manual labor and intellectual culture, general suffrage and a stable administration, equality and mutual deference, the law of population and a comfortable subsistence for all, — this is the work of ages. It is to undo almost the whole past, to create society anew. Can we expect it to be done in a day ?

“ I see hostile forces on every side. In this country I see false and pernicious notions about democracy, and much unfaithfulness to free institutions. I shut my eyes on none of its dangers, though these seem to me much exaggerated by the friends as well as foes of freedom, in Europe. A dark cloud hangs over the reputation of our country at this moment, and I care not how loud the reproaches are which come to us from your side the ocean. But it ought to be considered that the commercial crash here, which has distressed and exasperated our foreign creditors, and made them set us down as a nation of cheats, has had nothing to do with our free institutions. It has grown out of the spirit, the epidemic vice of our age, the mad passion for great, sudden accumulation, which has raged everywhere, but has found peculiar temptations and facilities in a new country, of boundless, unexplored resources. I, who live here, see that the people, after this storm, are much as they were before. Many individuals have committed great frauds ; but the great mass are unharmed in character. I trust in those around me, as before. A fear as to the stability of property never crossed my mind. Amidst our great commercial distresses, there has been much activity in the cause of morals, religion, education ; and whilst Europe is loading us with all manner of hard names, a real progress is going on in intelligence, temperance, and I hope philanthropy.

“ That what you call social science is in its infancy, I feel ; and our whole civilization is so tainted by selfishness, mercenariness, and sensuality, that I sometimes fear that it must be swept away to

<sup>1</sup> To J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi.



prepare for something better. But amidst these evils, have not some higher impulses been given to the world? Is there not a growing intelligence? Are not great ideas striving, however vaguely, in the common mind? The idea of *human rights* can never be stifled again. True, the vagueness of grand thoughts is perilous; but must they not pass through this stage before they become precise and practical? The spirit of Christianity seems to me to be more and more extricating itself from the pernicious dogmas in which it has so long been imprisoned. Christianity is becoming a new power in society. I expect from these causes no wonderful changes. You and I shall not see the Millennium. The French Revolution may have been but the first volcano; but has not this terrible volcano done good? Is not every government in Europe better administered in consequence of it?

“But I stop. I wanted only to say, that I see bright as well as dark aspects in the times, and that I approach the grave without the gloom which so often gathers over the mind in advancing years. On one subject I wish much to communicate with you, and that is, the condition of the laboring classes, with whom I sympathize much. Important changes *must* take place in their state. They must share more largely in the fruits of their toil, and in means of improvement. How this is to be accomplished, is a problem which often exercises my mind. I wish I could see the way growing clearer.”

“*January, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> Did I not look on our present state as merely a *transition* one, I should be tempted to think, that, had we never known a bank, canal, steamboat, or railroad, we should be far better off at this moment. We have been made drunk with the spirit of rapid accumulation, and the imagination has been maddened with prospects of boundless wealth. England is suffering from the same causes. What a comment on the present commercial spirit is the condition of England! Thousands and ten thousands starving, in the sight of luxury and ostentation! Does the earth show a sadder sight than this? England seems to be teaching one great lesson, namely, that art and science, skill and energy, and all the forces of nature, concentrated by selfishness for the accumulation of wealth, produce degradation and misery; that nothing but the spirit of Christianity, which is in direct hostility to the present spirit of trade or accumulation, can heal the woes of society. I have faith that this great truth is to be learned, and that the present deformed social state is not to last forever.

“Very truly, your friend.”

<sup>1</sup> To Thomas Thorneley, Esq.

“*Boston, February 7, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> An American, loving freedom and his race, cannot but be shocked, in visiting countries where the spirit of aristocracy has triumphed for ages. But still, a comparison with the past may show that much has been gained, and that great causes are at work for human melioration. At the present moment, the most powerful agent in society is trade, — a very coarse and worldly one, to be sure, — but still, one which is breaking down national distinctions, wearing out prejudices, extending more and more the republic of literature and thought, giving different countries a common interest, and preparing the way for a more rapid diffusion of quickening ideas, as fast as they spring up in gifted minds. Is it not also forming everywhere a middle class, a power to balance the aristocracy, and which must seek protection in liberal principles?

“I know the corrupting influence of the passion for accumulation, and I should groan, were I to think that the present social state was to last for ever. But may not the quickening of industry, the multiplication of material comforts, and the progress and new application of physical science, be necessary preparations to the extension of intelligence, and of a spirit of improvement through the now neglected masses? The changes, often rapid, which are now produced by discoveries in the arts, and by new commercial movements, favor the love of change, and especially give to men a tendency to apply principles of all kinds to practice. The worlds of speculation and action are found to be nearer to each other than had been supposed. The idea of a better state seems less a dream. I have spoken of trade; and I might name, in connection with this, the press, and purer conceptions of Christianity, which seem to me growing forces in society.

“The want of faith in improvement, which you deplore, is the darkest symptom. Much of this, I am sorry to say, is to be found here, but chiefly among what are called ‘the better classes.’ These are always selfishly timid, and never originate improvements worthy of the name. That the French Revolution should be followed by a great reaction on the Continent in favor of the old and established cannot surprise us; but I have a feeling that men’s minds cannot relapse, after that shock, into the old lethargy. Are not great ideas more recognized? Liberty and equality may be dreaded or derided; but has not the idea of *Rights* taken a new hold on men’s minds? Is the common man as unconscious of the injuries he suffers as formerly? Is not the notion, however vague, of the true and only proper function of government unfolding, and

<sup>1</sup> To Harmanus Bleecker, Esq.

is not a new standard silently establishing itself, by which rulers are to be tried?

“The want of faith in man, which you speak of, is melancholy, as it springs, in a great measure, from moral dissoluteness, and from want of faith in God and Christ. These do throw a cloud over the world. But man is never to be despaired of. I have an unshaken hope, founded, first, on the providence of God and the promises of his word, and, next, on Human Nature. There is an infinity of resource in the human soul. The French Revolution is in one sense encouraging. It shows us a seemingly old, worn-out nation, rising all at once into the fiery enthusiasm of youth. We can never say that our nature is exhausted. It breaks out suddenly into new and most unexpected forms. We have a remarkable testimony to this truth in our country. At this moment, the whole country is shaken by the temperance movement. A reform of the most desperate drunkards — such as we should have called a miracle a few years ago — is spreading everywhere; and this work began in a dram-shop at Baltimore! Shall we despair of such a race? . . . .

“In such a world, who shall set limits to change and revolution?”

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#### CHAPTER IV.—THE ANTISLAVERY MOVEMENT.

INSPIRED, as Dr. Channing was, with the life of universal humanity, which was quickening the age, with reverence for man, the idea of equal rights, and longing for fraternal relations between all classes of society, he could not be insensible to the crimes and outrages inevitably incident to the system of American slavery. Personal acquaintance, even from early years, with the colored race, had shown him the sensibility, affectionateness, capacity of rapid improvement, energy, both intellectual and practical, and, above all, the strong religious tendencies, of the millions of his countrymen so long kept down by cruel injustice and mean prejudice. He saw that an inhuman institution, originated by the oppressions of the warrior class in the rudest ages, and needlessly perpetuated by the selfish sloth of civilized men, was a wasting disease in the very vitals of this nation, corrupting at once its policy, industry, manners, conscience, and religion. He well knew, too, how steadily this cancer, tampered with by palliatives when it should have been



cut out, had grown, and how deeply it had interwoven its roots through the whole texture of the character and conduct of our people. He watched, therefore, with much anxiety the progress of the antislavery reform in Great Britain, with the hope that the development of a more humane policy in that leading commercial nation would react powerfully upon the United States. In 1828, he thus expressed his desires and apprehensions to his friend Miss Roscoe:—

“I rejoice in the zeal with which the cause of the Africans is espoused among you. On this subject I have had one fear, that too great stress had been laid on the physical sufferings of the slaves. I apprehend that the slaves of our country suffer less than the peasantry in some countries of Europe. The true ground, I think, is, that slavery is a *wrong*, be the yoke lighter or heavier, and that, even where it provides sufficiently for the physical being, it destroys the intellectual and moral being, and utterly extinguishes the hope and capacity of progress. I trust your efforts are to prosper, for nothing can rid us of this curse in this country but a strong moral and religious feeling, and this will be aided by enlightened public sentiment in other countries.”

It was while Dr. Channing was in this state of mind in relation to the one monster evil of our land, deploring the insensibility of the North, and meditating upon the means of its removal, that the necessities of health compelled him to pass a winter in the island of Santa Cruz. He sailed from Boston in the autumn of 1830, at the very time when the uncompromising Garrison—who already, in the “Genius of Emancipation,” had uttered the watchword of Abolition—was preparing, as a journeyman printer, at the cost of his daily wages and in extra hours of labor, to write the leaders, set up the types, and, with his own hand, to strike off the first number of the *LIBERATOR*.

His residence in Santa Cruz supplied just the stimulus which Dr. Channing needed, to revive his youthful recollections of the wrongs and horrors of slavery, to open his heart to the influx of the reform spirit which Providence was infusing, and to prepare him to co-operate efficiently with the antislavery movement. As he frequently used to say, in after years, he then “passed through a regeneration” upon this subject. In the last address which he ever made, he thus bore his testimony to the value of this experience:<sup>1</sup>—

“The circumstance which particularly gave my mind a direction to this subject was a winter’s residence in a West Indian island,

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. VI. p. 381. One Volume Edition, p. 907.

more than eleven years ago. I lived there on a plantation. The piazza in which I sat and walked almost from morning to night overlooked the negro village belonging to the estate. A few steps placed me in the midst of their huts. Here was a volume on slavery opened always before my eyes, and how could I help learning some of its lessons? The gang on this estate (for such is the name given to a company of slaves) was the best on the island, and among the best in the West Indies. The proprietor had labored to collect the best materials for it. His gang had been his pride and boast. The fine proportions, the graceful and sometimes dignified bearing, of these people could hardly be overlooked. Unhappily, misfortune had reduced the owner to bankruptcy. The estate had been mortgaged to a stranger, who could not personally superintend it; and I found it under the care of a passionate and licentious manager, in whom the poor slaves found a sad contrast to the kindness of former days. They sometimes came to the house where I resided with their mournful or indignant complaints; but were told that no redress could be found from the hands of their late master. In this case, of a plantation passing into strange hands, I saw that the mildest form of slavery might at any time be changed into the worst."

In a note appended to the first edition of his work on Slavery, but subsequently suppressed, because he was unwilling to divert the attention of his readers from principles to details, Dr. Channing thus recorded some of his recollections. They are of interest, as showing the influences which surrounded him, his habits of observation, and cast of thought.

"I wish to add a few statements, to show how little reliance can be placed on what seem, to a superficial observer, mitigations or advantages of slavery, and how much safer it is to argue from the experience of all times, and from the principles of human nature, than from insulated facts.

"I once passed a colored woman at work on a plantation, who was singing, apparently with animation, and whose general manners would have led me to set her down as the happiest of the gang. I said to her, 'Your work seems pleasant to you.' She replied, 'No, massa.' Supposing that she referred to something particularly disagreeable in her immediate occupation, I said to her, 'Tell me, then, what part of your work is most pleasant.' She answered, with much emphasis, '*No part* pleasant. We *forced* to do it.' These few words let me into the heart of the slave.

"On this plantation, the most favored woman, whose life was

the easiest, earnestly besought a friend of mine to buy her and put her in the way to earn her freedom. A daughter of this woman, very young, had fallen a victim to the manager of the estate. How far this cause influenced the exasperated mother I did not learn.

“I heard of an estate, managed by an individual who was considered as singularly successful, and who was able to govern the slaves without the use of the whip. I was anxious to see him, and trusted that some discovery had been made favorable to humanity. I asked him how he was able to dispense with corporal punishment. He replied to me, with a very determined look, ‘The slaves know that the work *must* be done, and that it is better to do it without punishment than with it.’ In other words, the certainty and dread of chastisement were so impressed on them, that they never incurred it.

“I then found that the slaves on this well-managed estate decreased in number. I asked the cause. He replied, with perfect frankness and ease, ‘The gang is not large enough for the estate.’ In other words, they were not equal to the work of the plantation, and yet were made to do it, though with the certainty of abridging life. . . .

“I once heard some slaves, who had been taken by law from their master, singing a song of their own composition, and at the end of every stanza they joined with a complaining tone in a chorus, of which the burden was, ‘We got no massa.’ Here seemed a striking proof of attachment to the master; but on inquiry into the rest of the song, I found it was an angry enumeration of the severities which they were suffering from the new superintendent. They wanted their master as an escape from cruelty.

“Facts of this kind, which make no noise, which escape or mislead a casual observer, help to show the character of slavery more than occasional excesses of cruelty, though these must be frequent. They show how deceptive are the appearances of good connected with it, and how much may be suffered under the manifestation of much kindness. It is, in fact, next to impossible to estimate precisely the evils of slavery. The slave writes no books, and the slaveholder is too inured to the system, and too much interested in it, to be able to comprehend it. Perhaps the laws of the Slave States are the most unexceptionable witnesses which we can obtain from that quarter; and the barbarity of these is decisive testimony against an institution which requires such means for its support.”

Dr. Channing returned to the United States in May, 1831, and in an address to his society thus opened to them his heart in rela-



tion to the inhuman system of whose debasing results he had been a witness.

“*June, 1831.* The most striking feature in the state of society which I have been called to observe is the existence of slavery. This drew my thoughts more than all that was peculiar in the natural world, and, though I saw this evil in its mildest form, my conviction of its magnitude grew stronger and more painful. I saw slavery, as I have said, in its mildest form, and I saw that it was not the unmingled misery which it is often declared to be. I recollect that I learned very early in life to repeat the lines of the poet,

‘I would not have a slave to carry me,’ &c.,

but I never saw the white man carried, or fanned, or regarded with trembling, by the African. The slaveholder tells you, and with a good deal of truth, that the slave is better fed than the peasants in several parts of Europe, nor is he, perhaps, as often overworked. Indeed, his physical condition, though far worse than it should be, is not worse than that of many, even in this country. The old severity of discipline is very much relaxed. The lash, though used unjustifiably, is used comparatively seldom, and solitary confinement is found a more effectual punishment.

“Still, I think no power of conception can do justice to the evils of slavery. They are chiefly moral, they act on the mind, and through the mind bring intense suffering on the body. As far as the human soul can be destroyed, slavery is that destroyer. It is a direct war with the high powers and principles of our nature, and sinks man as far as possible into the brute. The slave is regarded as property, treated as property, considered as having no rights, subjected to another’s arbitrary will, and thus loses all consciousness of what he is, and what he should be. The feeling of degradation enters into the very constitution of his mind. He has no motive for exerting or improving his powers; for, do what he will, his lot remains the same. He works not for reward, but from compulsion; for, work or not, he receives the same support. His wife and children depend on him in no degree, but receive the necessities and comforts of life from the common master; so that the tenderest and most interesting dependencies of life are broken up, and industry has none of the springs, and is solaced by none of the affections, which make labor here so animated and cheerful. His future can be but a repetition of the past. He has no hopes, and when you add to this the utter ignorance in which he grows up, you will understand how necessarily he yields himself to the present moment, sinks into a creature of sense, continues as improvi-

dent as a child, and abandons himself to gross vices. Through these excesses, joined to occasional overworking, the slave population decreases, and disease, debility, and premature old age bring on a dreadful amount of physical suffering. That, under such an education, the sense of justice should be extinguished, — that they whose rights are every moment violated should not be alive to the rights of others, — that slaves should make lying and cheating their vocation, and should congratulate themselves on every opportunity of robbing the tyrant by whom they are robbed, — all this is a thing of course ; so that with the sensual are joined the anti-social vices, and they know no restraint save fear.

“ I have thrown out these remarks, because I feel that we have little conception of the infinite evil of slavery. I desire earnestly that a new sentiment should be called forth on this subject, for I am persuaded that the prevalent, clear, decided expression of such a sentiment would produce great results. We live at a time when great truths can be expressed nowhere without spreading themselves everywhere. It is astonishing and gratifying to see the influence which just and benevolent sentiments in Europe on the subject of slavery have exerted on the West Indies. The melioration of the condition of the slaves within thirty years is great. I have heard the cruelties which were perpetrated thirty years ago spoken of with horror. A new spirit of humanity has spread among masters, and this has come from the deep interest existing abroad, and especially in England, in the condition of the slave. It is one of the noble distinctions of this age, that thoughts, principles, feelings, fly like the winds from country to country, that philanthropy is found to be as contagious as vice. There can be little doubt that the public feeling of England is to emancipate the West Indies. A right public feeling here, I believe, coming in aid of this foreign impulse, would work as surely on our own country. Slavery cannot live against the united moral convictions and reprobation of the civilized world.”

The year 1831 was as eventful as any which the United States has as yet witnessed ; for then was the idea of freedom, providentially working in the spirit of this nation, at length embodied in the words and deeds of faithful men. From the fatal hour, when, by the compromises of the Constitution, the essential principles of the republic were belied, and its professed declarations of justice practically disowned as visionary abstractions, — from the yet more fatal hour of the Missouri Compromise, when Northern freemen, bribed, cajoled, bewildered, frightened, yielded up the duties, rights, honor, of their constituents to the dictation of slaveholding politicians,

trained to tyranny by oligarchical usages, — a rapid deterioration may be traced in the sentiments, opinions, conduct, of all parties throughout our country. Our youthful enthusiasm for liberty was stiffening into a premature decrepitude of worldly prudence. The conscience of the Union, in church and state, in social circles, colleges, and the press, in industry and trade, was palsy-struck. Hereafter, more clearly than at present, will it be recognized, that the Antislavery movement has been, by God's blessing, the means of this people's regeneration.

At the time of Dr. Channing's return, the "Liberator" had struggled through its first six months of precarious support and bitter persecution. It had made itself felt as a quickening power in the very heart of the body politic, and every limb and fibre were beginning to tingle with the consciousness of returning vitality. Mr. Garrison, and the small band of firm and undoubting coadjutors, who saw that the question of the abolition of slavery was one of life or death, had sounded forth their startling summons of "Immediate Emancipation." The delusive hopes excited in thousands of honest hearts by the scheme of sending back the colored race to Africa, were reluctantly yielding to the proof, that the Colonization Society, however beneficial it might become to a distant continent and a later age, was wholly powerless to redeem the United States from the crime and curse of slaveholding institutions. A new era had opened; the great political reform of the nation had begun. It was with profoundest gratitude, and yet most anxious apprehension, that Dr. Channing regarded this crisis, which he had so earnestly longed for, — with gratitude, for he could not but recognize the sincerity of the apostles of this new gospel, — with apprehension, for their tones of uncompromising sternness jarred discordantly upon his finely attuned ear. Might not his own words well have recurred to him in extenuation of what he thought excesses? "At such periods, men gifted with great powers of thought, and loftiness of sentiment, are especially summoned to the conflict with evil. They hear, as it were, in their own magnanimity and generous aspirations, the voice of a divinity; and, thus commissioned, and burning with passionate devotion to truth and freedom, they must and will speak with an indignant energy, and they ought not to be measured by the standard of ordinary minds in ordinary times. Men of natural softness and timidity, of a sincere but effeminate virtue, will be apt to look on these bolder, hardier spirits as violent, perturbed, and uncharitable, and the charge will not be wholly groundless. But that deep feeling of evils, which is necessary to effectual conflict with them, and



which marks God's most powerful messengers to mankind, cannot breathe itself in soft and tender accents. The deeply moved soul will speak strongly, and ought to speak so as to move and shake nations."<sup>1</sup>

The following beautiful letters, from two of the bravest at once and gentlest of the first-born Abolitionists, will most satisfactorily exhibit his relations at this period to the Antislavery movement. The first is from Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, who, with characteristic magnanimity, risked her all in the cause of the slave.

"I shall always recollect the first time I ever saw Dr. Channing in private. It was immediately after I published my 'Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans' (in 1833). A publication taking broad Antislavery ground was then a rarity; indeed, that was the first *book* in the United States of such a character; and it naturally produced a sensation disproportioned to its merits. I sent a copy to Dr. Channing, and a few days after he came to see me, at Cottage Place, at least a mile and a half from his residence at Mount Vernon. It was a very bright, sunny day, but he carried his cloak on his arm, and seemed fatigued with the long walk. He stayed nearly three hours; during which time we held a most interesting conversation on the general interests of humanity, and on slavery in particular. He told me something of his experience in the West Indies, and said the impression produced by the *sight* of slavery had never left his mind. He expressed great joy that the 'Appeal' had been published, and urged me never to desert the cause, through evil or through good report. In some respects, he thought I went too far. He then entertained the idea, which he afterwards discarded, that slavery existed in a milder form in the United States than elsewhere. I was fresh from the bloody records of our own legislation, and was somewhat vehement in my opposition to this statement; and he sought to moderate me with those calm, wise words which none spoke so well as he.

"We afterwards had many interviews. He often sent for me, when I was in Boston, and always urged me to come and tell him of every new aspect in the Antislavery cause. At every interview, I could see that he grew bolder and stronger on the subject, while I felt that I grew wiser and more just. At first I thought him timid, and even slightly timeserving; but I soon discovered that I formed this estimate from ignorance of his character. I learned that it was justice to *all*, not popularity for *himself*, which made him

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. I. pp. 24, 25. One Volume Edition, p. 504.

so cautious. He constantly grew upon my respect, until I came to regard him as the wisest, as well as the gentlest, apostle of humanity. I owe him thanks for preserving me from the one-sidedness into which zealous reformers are so apt to run. He never sought to undervalue the importance of Antislavery, but he said many things to prevent my looking upon it as the *only* question interesting to humanity. My mind needed this check; and I never think of his 'many-sided' conversations without deep gratitude.

"Dr. Channing's interest in the subject constantly increased, and I never met him without being struck with the progress he had made in overcoming some difficulty, which, for the time, troubled his sensitive conscience. I can now distinctly recollect several such steps. At one time he was very doubtful whether it were right to petition Congress. He afterwards headed a petition himself. In all such cases he was held back by the conscientious fear of violating some other duty, in endeavoring to do his duty to the slave. Some zealous reformers did not understand this; and thus construed into a love of popularity what was, in fact, but a fine sense of justice, a more universal love of his species."

The next is from the Rev. Samuel J. May, who, prompt and patient, firm and modest, tolerant though just, set forth in daily life, through all these years of fiery trial, an example of fidelity, wherein uncompromising integrity and benignant gentleness were blended in rare beauty.

"Soon after the enterprise of Mr. Garrison and the Immediate Abolitionists commenced, I found it had attracted the notice of Dr. Channing. Whenever he met me, he would make particular inquiries respecting our doctrine, purposes, measures, and progress; and repeatedly invited me to his house, for the express purpose, as he said, of conversing upon the subject. He always spoke as if he were deeply interested, as if he were warmed by a lively sympathy with our movement; although he was afraid of what he thought to be the tendency of some of our opinions and measures.

"In the autumn of 1834, I spent several hours with Dr. Channing, in earnest conversation upon Abolitionism and the Abolitionists. My habitual reverence for him was such, that I had been always apt to defer too readily to his opinions, or not to make a very stout defence of my own, when I could not yield them to his. But by the time to which I refer, I had become so thoroughly convinced of the truth of the leading doctrines of the Abolitionists, and so

earnestly engaged in the dissemination of them, that our conversation assumed, more than it had ever done, the character of a debate.

“It seemed to me, that he clearly perceived the essential truth of all the prominent doctrines of the Immediate Abolitionists, and acknowledged the vital importance of the cause we had espoused. His principal, if not his only objections, were alleged against the severity of our denunciations, the harshness of our language, the vehemence, heat, and excitement caused by our meetings. He dwelt upon these objections, which, if they were as well founded as he supposed, lay against what was only incidental, not an essential part of our movement; he dwelt upon them, until I felt impatient, indignant at him; and, forgetting for the moment my wonted reverence, I broke out with great warmth of expression and manner.

“‘Dr. Channing,’ I said, ‘I am tired of these complaints. The cause of suffering humanity, the cause of our oppressed, crushed colored countrymen, has called as loudly upon others as upon us, who are known as the Abolitionists. It was just as incumbent upon others, as upon us, to espouse it. We are not to blame that wiser and better men did not espouse it long ago. The cry of millions in bondage had been heard throughout our land for half a century, and disregarded. The wise and prudent saw the wrong, but thought it not wise and prudent to lift a finger for its correction. The priests and Levites beheld their robbed and wounded countrymen, but passed by on the other side. The children of Abraham held their peace, until at last “the very stones have cried out,” in abhorrence of this tremendous wickedness; and you must expect them to cry out like “the stones.” You must not expect of many of these, who have been left to take up this great cause, that they will plead it in all that seemliness of phrase which the scholars and practised rhetoricians of our country might use; you must not expect them to manage with all the calmness and discretion that the clergy and statesmen might exhibit. But the scholars, the clergy, the statesmen, had done nothing, and did not seem about to do anything; and for my part, I thank God that at last any persons, be they who they may, have moved earnestly in this cause, for no movement can be in vain. We Abolitionists are just what we are, — babes, sucklings, obscure men, silly women, publicans, sinners; and we shall manage the matter we have taken in hand just as might be expected of such persons as we are. It is unbecoming in abler men, who stood by, and would do nothing, to complain of us because we manage this matter no better.



“‘Dr. Channing,’ I continued, with great earnestness, ‘it is not our fault, that those who might have managed this great reform more prudently have left it to us to manage as we may be able. It is not our fault, that those who might have pleaded for the enslaved so much more wisely and eloquently, both with the pen and the living voice, than we can, have been silent. We are not to blame, sir, that you, who more, perhaps, than any other man might have so raised the voice of remonstrance, that it should have been heard throughout the length and breadth of the land,—we are not to blame, sir, that you have not so spoken. And now, because inferior men have begun to speak and act against what you yourself acknowledge to be an awful injustice, it is not becoming in you to complain of us, because we do it in an inferior style. Why, sir, have you not moved, why have you not spoken before?’

“At this point, I bethought me to whom I was administering this earnest rebuke,—the man that stood among the highest of our great and good men,—the man who had ever treated me with the kindness of a father, and whom, from my childhood, I had been accustomed to revere more, perhaps, than any one living. I was almost overwhelmed with a sense of my temerity. His countenance showed that he was much moved. I could not suppose he would receive very graciously all I had said. I awaited, in painful expectation, the reply he would make. It seemed as if long minutes elapsed before the silence was broken; when, in a very subdued manner, and in his kindest tones of voice, he said, ‘Brother May, I acknowledge the justice of your reproof; I have been silent too long.’

“I never can forget his words, look, manner. I then saw the beauty, the magnanimity, of an humble soul. He was exalted in my esteem more than before.

“Early in December, 1835, he published his book on Slavery. A few days after its appearance, he sent me a kind invitation to dine with him, in company with Mr. S. E. Sewall, that he might know, as he said, what we thought of his work.

“The next spring, I removed to the city, and became general agent of the Antislavery Society. I had not been there a month, before Dr. Channing called and invited me to preach for him,—the only invitation to preach in Boston that I received while agent of the Antislavery Society,—a term of fourteen months.”

Dr. Channing’s relations to Abolitionism at this period are yet further explained in letters from himself to Dr. Follen.

“*Newport, July 7, 1834.* There is no need of what is called *unanimity* in this or any other cause. Men are perpetually sacrific-

cing their intellectual and moral independence to this idol. So great a subject as slavery cannot be viewed by all from one position, nor with entire agreement as to the modes of treating it; and the cause will be aided by the existence of a body who have much sympathy with people at large as to the difficulties of emancipation, but who uncompromisingly maintain that the abolition of slavery ought *immediately* to be decided on, and means used for *immediately commencing* this work. I feel no freedom, as some sects say, to join any of your bodies, but the cause is very dear to my heart."

"*Newport, July 26, 1834.* I have been much shocked by the late riots in New York. That mobs should break out there, however painful, is not surprising; for we know that materials for such explosions exist in all large cities. But in this case there was a toleration of the mob by the *respectable* part of the community, showing a willingness that free discussion should be put down by force, and that slavery should be perpetuated indefinitely. This is a sad omen, a melancholy indication of the decay of the spirit of freedom and humanity. Every kind of 'fanaticism,' it seems, may be endured but that of philanthropy and liberty, and this is even to be put beyond the pale of law. The late trials of the rioters are a farce. Not a newspaper in the country, which I have seen, has expressed indignation at this violation of the sacred right of inquiry and free expression of opinion.

"I do not mean, however, to say that I consider the Abolitionists as blameless. They have outraged the feelings and prejudices of the people unnecessarily. Instead of confining themselves to obtain freedom and means of improvement for the slave, and leaving these to work out their own natural and sure effects, they have done much to intoxicate the colored people, and to exasperate the laboring whites by their mode of treating and speaking of the former class, and have alarmed the community by their mode of setting up the claims of this class to immediate emancipation, and to equal consideration and political rights with other citizens. I know they explain the word *immediate* so as to make it innoxious, but it is a fatal mistake for a party to choose a watchword which almost certainly conveys a wrong sense, and needs explanation. I make these remarks, not in a spirit of censoriousness, but because the mob and their abettors should have justice done them.

"Still, this New York insurrection against liberty fills me with indignation and grief. The duty of the Abolitionists seems to me clear. Whilst they ought to review their principles with great deliberation, they ought not, at this moment, to *recant* anything, because recantation will certainly be set down to the account of

“fear. I wish them to adopt a wiser course and a more benevolent tone towards their opponents; but not to abate their firmness one jot, not to use a wavering word, not to bring suspicion on their character and motives by the least appearance of timidity. I wish them to give up their extravagance, and to pursue practicable objects, and such as consist with the principles of human nature; but to do this resolutely and from conviction, and not with the appearance of unwilling and forced concession to their foes. These persecutions, if met in the spirit of forbearance, calm dignity, and energy, will aid them. Blessed are the persecuted, is a truth for all times.”

We have reached the solemn season, when the hosts of light and darkness seemed to hover, in deadly conflict, over every State, city, and village in our land, and the fate of the nation hung on the issue. On the one side, the friends of freedom, rallying around the standard of “Immediate Emancipation,” associated themselves into national, state, county, and town Antislavery societies; religious and secular presses gave voice to the swelling enthusiasm of the people of the North; memorials extensively signed were poured in upon Congress; lecturers, without purse or scrip, spread over the country, preaching a new moral crusade; George Thompson, radiant in his humane zeal, swept through our communities, slaying, as he went, the serpent-brood of worldly sophistries with the golden bow and keen shafts of his eloquence; and, above all, the news of emancipation in the British West Indies filled the hearts of all true lovers of their race with emulous hope. But, on the other side, mobs, silently tolerated, or openly cheered on by leading editors, politicians, and influential men, attacked and plundered the houses of leading Abolitionists; lecturers were insulted, pelted, outraged, outcast; pamphlets and papers, on pretence of their containing “incendiary matter,” were, in utter violation of law, excluded from the mails, and publicly burned; prices were set upon the heads of the most famous advocates of freedom; governors and legislatures of Southern States demanded the arrest and surrender of individuals made obnoxious by their zeal for the slaves; the Executive of the United States invited the attention of Congress to the painful excitement, and recommended the prohibition, under severe penalties, of the circulation of Antislavery papers through the South; and even governors and high officers of Northern States dared to advise the passage of enactments designed to put an end to the Antislavery agitation. It was in the beginning of this strife that Dr. Channing spoke thus to his people, on his return from Newport.



October, 1834. "The civilized world will heap just reproaches on a *free* nation, in which mobs pour forth their fury on the opposers of *slavery*. These mobs are, indeed, most dishonorable to us as a people, because they have been too much the expression of public sentiment. Against this sentiment I feel bound to bear earnest and indignant testimony. The language which filled the country at the time of these disturbances was such as should never have passed the lips of freemen. Nothing was more common than to hear it said, 'These mobs are bad, but they will put down *Antislavery*.' Why was it that these mobs ruled our largest city for several successive nights? Because there was a willingness that the Antislavery movement should be put down by force. The mobs, considered in themselves, were of secondary importance. In the present low condition of society, every great city has materials for them. But the spirit of the community, which gave them scope, and which wished them success, deserves the severest reprobation of the philanthropist and the Christian. The truth is, that, as a people, we are indifferent to the greatest of wrongs and calamities, that is, slavery, and therefore, whilst we can tolerate all other excesses, we cannot away with the excesses of the friends of emancipation. There is no sympathy with those who are wounded and stung with the injuries of the slave, and therefore we are willing that the dearest right of freemen, that of free discussion, should be wrested from them. It is this state of feeling in the community which is far more melancholy than a vulgar mob. It is impossible to read the newspapers of the country without seeing the profound unconcern which pervades the country on the subject of slavery. In truth, New England has been disgraced by publications going to reconcile us to the evil. It is said, again and again, that we have no right to meddle with slavery at the South. What! Is it meddling, to discuss a great question, one which involves the happiness of millions, and to spread abroad neglected truth? . . .

"I know that the mobs to which I have referred were stirred up and defended by the cry of fanaticism raised against the advocates of abolition. That this clamor was altogether unfounded, I do not say. I do not stand here as the advocate of Antislavery associations. That they have carried good principles to extremes, have winked out of sight the difficulties of their object, have hoped to accomplish the work of years in a moment, have exposed their cause to suspicion by bitterness of language, by precipitancy, by needlessly outraging public feelings or prejudices, I certainly shall not deny. But fanaticism—if such be the proper term for an excess of feeling above judgment—is seldom separated from a

good cause. The most generous sentiments take this form, and if fanaticism is to be put down by force, I fear nothing great, nothing worthy of a thrilling love, will be left us. Religion especially must be proscribed. Mobs must be let loose against all the more fervent manifestations of this highest principle of the soul.

“ When a good cause suffers from the excesses of its friends, the true course is, not to abandon it in despair, nor to surrender it to the frenzy of the populace, but to espouse and prosecute it with calm wisdom, enlightened zeal, and unfettered, fearless resolution. The great interests of humanity do not lose their claims on us because sometimes injudiciously maintained. We ought to blame extravagance, but we ought also to remember, that very often it is the indifference of the many to a good and great work, which hurries the few who cleave to it into excess. Let slavery be truly understood among us, and let just moral feelings in regard to it be generally cherished and expressed, and fanaticism would pass away, and a moral power against slavery would steadily grow and spread, before which this greatest calamity, scourge, curse, and reproach of our country would yield.”

A copy of this sermon was requested for publication by some of Dr. Channing's hearers ; and in reply to the committee who applied for it, he wrote as follows. This letter serves to set in a very clear light the conscientiousness and thoroughness which so many misunderstood for fear.

“ *October 20, 1834.* GENTLEMEN : — Your approbation of the discourse delivered by me on Sunday last has been truly gratifying. On receiving your application, I had to propose to myself only one question, and that was, whether the publication of the discourse would be useful, and I regret to say that I am obliged to differ from you in opinion on this point.

“ You recollect that my single object was to offer some remarks on the feelings and state of mind brought to light by the recent outrages among ourselves, and consequently none of the topics were discussed to any extent. This was particularly true in relation to slavery. I exposed some false and pernicious notions often expressed here on the subject ; but the strength of the argument against slavery was not given. In truth, this great evil was hardly touched. Now, if my discourse were to be confined to this part of the country, it might be useful ; but it would be spread far and wide, and would excite attention at the South, and I cannot but fear that so narrow and imperfect a view of the subject, which takes no notice of many great and difficult points, would be any-

thing but satisfactory, and might even prejudice the cause of truth and humanity. The necessity under which I was laid, by my general plan, of discoursing on other subjects besides slavery, not only confined my observations on this topic far more than I wished, but gave the sermon a local character, which is an additional reason for withholding it from the press. Were I to publish, I should feel myself bound, not only to vindicate more fully the invaded rights of Antislavery societies, but to enlarge on what I deem their errors. I have always protested against their motto, 'Immediate Emancipation,' as indefinite and equivocal, as needing much explanation, and as exposing their cause to the imputation of alarming rashness. I have always believed that the people of the South, if they would conscientiously and in good faith resolve to remove the evil, could best devise the means, safe alike to master and to slave, and I would not urge the precipitate adoption of any other.

"On one account, I am sorry to decline compliance with your request. It is possible — though I cannot think it very probable — that I may be considered, by those who do not know me, as shrinking from the reproaches which would be brought on me by the circulation of my opinions on slavery, and I should be wrong to seem to countenance by my example a selfish prudence. Unless I deceive myself, the reproach attached to what I deem important truths would be, with me, a motive for giving them the aid of my feeble testimony. I consider the very strength of pernicious prejudices as a reason for assailing them. In proportion to the vehemence with which principles involving human happiness and improvement are opposed, should be our zeal in their defence. We are bound, as Christians, to lay down even life for the truth, and that man is little worthy of this honorable name who shrinks from the lighter injuries which fall upon unpopular opinions at the present day. I was induced to preach on this subject, in part by the desire of freeing myself from the painful consciousness of unfaithfulness to the interests of liberty and humanity, and by the hope of giving new confidence to those who hold the same views with myself; and these motives would lead me to publish the discourse, could I avoid the conviction of its unfitness for general circulation. It is my hope that I may have strength and time to do something, however little, for the promotion of just moral feeling in relation to slavery, for I am persuaded that the want of this is the real and only difficulty in the way of its abolition. I see but one sure remedy for slavery, and that is a deep sense of moral and religious obligation in regard to it; and to spread this at home and abroad, in the North and the South, and through the civilized



world, seems to me one of the most important objects of Christian philanthropy.

“I am the last person to give unnecessary pain and offence to my fellow-citizens at the South. From no part of the country have I received more cordial expressions of sympathy and approbation than from that quarter. But I should hold myself utterly unworthy of their good opinion, if such considerations should deter me from the publication of what I deem important truths. I would not, however, in speaking freely, forget the spirit of our religion, or the gratitude which I owe to the South, and I shall never cease to lament and condemn the use of exasperating language in this solemn controversy.

“This city has not as yet incurred the guilt and disgrace of outrages intended to put down by force the public discussion of slavery. May we be spared this infamy! And to avert the evil nothing is needed but that our well-disposed citizens, who form an immense majority, should express their abhorrence and indignation at every attempt, wherever and however made, to wrest by violence from any portion of the community the rights of freemen.”

The following letters will show us yet further the working of Dr. Channing's mind during this time of trial, and the motives which finally compelled him to address a larger public than his parish, and thus to fulfil his long delayed plan.

“*August 19, 1835.* MY DEAR SIR:—I have this moment seen in the Daily Advertiser that a meeting is to be held on Friday afternoon, in Boston, on the subject of slavery. I cannot but look forward to this meeting with great solicitude. I have seen with sorrow the influence of the unwise proceedings of Antislavery societies, in impairing among us the true moral feeling in regard to this tremendous evil; and I cannot but fear that our citizens, in their zeal to oppose an extravagant party, may prove unfaithful to those great principles of freedom and equal rights on which our glory as a community rests. If the meeting will satisfy itself with pronouncing severe reprobation on any attempt to stir up the slaves to revolt, with deprecating the circulation of inflammatory pamphlets among them, and with disclaiming all desire in the North to interfere by any political action with slavery in the Slave States, no harm will be done. I am not aware, however, that the Antislavery societies have advanced any principles, or adopted any measures, which call for such rebuke and such disclaimer. If they have, I shall not find fault with a public expression of reprehension, though the wisdom of such a censure may be doubted.

“ But in attempting to put down a party, let not great principles be touched or compromised. Let it not be forgotten, that liberty is above all price, and that to rob a fellow-creature of it is to inflict the greatest wrong. Any resolve passed at the proposed meeting, implying, however indirectly, that a human being can rightfully be held and treated as property, — any resolve intended to discourage the free expression of opinion on slavery, or to sanction the lawless violence which has been directed against the Antislavery societies, — any resolve implying that the Christian and philanthropist may not strive to abolish slavery by moral influences, by appeals to the reason, conscience, and heart of the slaveholder, — any resolve expressing stronger sympathy with the slaveholder than with the slave, or tending at all to encourage the continuance of slavery, — will afflict me beyond measure. I have gloried in belonging to a city which has been eminently the cradle of civil and religious liberty, and where the respect due to every human being is understood, perhaps, better than in any other community. That Boston should in any way lend itself to the cause of oppression would be a dark omen indeed.”

“ *October 29, 1835.* You will wonder at finding me here so late ; but I was tempted to stay by the pleasantness of the season, and by the desire of more quiet and leisure than I could enjoy in Boston. I am now engaged heartily in writing on the subject of slavery, the very thing you so often urged. I have rather shrunk from the task, for I am easily exhausted by labor ; but I feel the importance of bringing the people to serious and deliberate reflection on this subject. The excitement against Antislavery societies has disturbed people's judgment in regard to slavery itself, and emboldened the South to use language very offensive and painful to the friends of freedom. I trust I shall write temperately, as well as freely and fervently. Say nothing of my purpose till you hear of the publication. It is possible I may be dissatisfied with my work.”

“ *Boston, November 9, 1835.* I have exhausted myself in writing my little book on Slavery. It is now in the press, and may be out in a fortnight. I was determined to write it by the declension of the spirit of freedom among us. The subject has been very painful to me, and I long to escape from it to more cheering views. However, we must learn to look evils in the face, and to bear the burdens of the suffering.”

This book on Slavery appeared at a most opportune season, — just as the community of Boston was beginning to be thoroughly sick with mortification, if not truly penitent, for the irreparable

disgrace inflicted on its fame by the mob of "highly respectable gentlemen," who, on the afternoon of October 21. broke up the meeting of the Female Antislavery Society, seized on Mr. Garrison, and vainly hunted for Mr. Thompson, even in a private dwelling, with the hope "that he might be brought to the tar-kettle before dark."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Channing's estimate of this work, and his gratification at the reception it met with, are thus manifested: —

"*Boston, December 16, 1835.*<sup>2</sup> I agree entirely with your criticism on the defect of logical arrangement in my book. I committed the offence with malice prepense, and was hoping that it would pass undetected, for you were the first to point it out. I inverted the proper order of the first two chapters, that I might fasten the reader immediately to the work, by presenting the topic in which the greatest interest could be felt. I knew that the great positions on which the argument was to rest were undeniably, universally admitted, so that there was nothing to fear from postponing the discussion of the second chapter.

"My greatest logical offence lay in postponing to the last head of the first chapter the topic which was fundamental, and involved in all the preceding. But this seemed to me necessary. You know the scepticism of the multitude as to human nature, its faculties, divine principles, and destiny, and you know, perhaps, that on these subjects I am thought to be a little *exalté*. Had I put these topics in front, I should have created a state of mind, in not a few readers, unfavorable to the truth. As it was, I had great difficulty with that last head. I cut it down not a little, softened expressions, tried to make it tame, that I might get the sympathies of the people. So far, I sacrificed logical order from choice. I confess, that, in other respects, I saw errors of this nature in the first chapter which might have been corrected; but my physical exhaustion in writing the work was great. I was stopped more than once by weakness, and had not courage to attempt to satisfy myself. The first chapter cost me comparatively little effort. The second was the only one upon which I spent the labor which the work deserved, and that, I think, is unexceptionable as respects logical arrangement.

"That you find so much to censure in the book gives me no pain. I have to thank my friends for letting me off so easily. That you found so much to approve gives me sincere pleasure. I certainly did the best which I could under the circumstances; but whilst I am most grateful to God for the unexpected reception it has met with,

<sup>1</sup> Boston Commercial Gazette, October 22, 1835.

<sup>2</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.



and the good it has done, I am as little satisfied with the execution of my task as any one can be."

"*Boston, January 4, 1836.* I hope you have received my packet containing my little work on Slavery. It has found a better reception here than I feared. How it is regarded at the South I do not know. I expected much reproach when I published it, both at the North and South. I cannot but believe I have done good. Many, I know, have given serious attention to the subject in consequence of this publication, and acknowledge its importance as never before. I should be glad to feel as if I had done my duty in this field, and might turn to another. I am not as well fitted, perhaps, as I should be, to contemplate evils. I sigh for brighter prospects. I have been cheering myself with writing some sermons on the greatness which breaks out in human nature, amidst all its sins and degradation. I could hardly live, if I could not see something good and great around me. This is as necessary to me as the sun's light, — more necessary, more cheering."

"*January 10, 1836.*<sup>1</sup> DEAR SIR:—I received your letter this morning, and I cannot let the day pass without assuring you of the great pleasure it gave me. I wrote the book with a hope of doing good, with a deep feeling of the need of such an appeal, and, I trust, from a strong conviction of duty. I waited long, and postponed the effort till I could wait no longer. I felt that some one ought to bear witness to the truth, but could hear of no one who felt himself called to the work. The reception of the book has been far more favorable than I expected. I knew that it would meet fierce opposition at a distance. I feared it would find not a few opposers at home. I thank God that so many have been disposed to hear me patiently. Many, who were grieved when they heard of my purpose to write on this subject, have expressed their satisfaction in the work. In this neighborhood, my end seems to have been answered to a good degree. That is, I have helped to fix great principles in minds which had become unsettled by the late excitement, and to awaken benevolence to the means of removing one of the greatest of evils.

"Your approbation is very precious. I know your sincere love of your fellow-creatures. I believe that, had my work breathed a different spirit, you would instinctively have been pained by it. My earnest desire and purpose was, to observe towards *all* those precepts of justice and benevolence which I was inculcating; and you give me the hope that I have not wholly failed. To be the occasion

<sup>1</sup> To Noah Worcester, D. D.

of joy to one whom I revere so much is no small recompense for my labor."

On the 26th of May, 1836, Dr. Channing attended for the first time a meeting of the New England Antislavery Convention. His impressions, as communicated in a letter to a friend, give a very good view of his hopes and fears in relation to the Abolitionists. He had been speaking of the meetings of the Unitarians during Anniversary week, and thus continues:—

"*May 27, 1836.* During the present week, we have had, not only religious meetings, but conventions of other societies. In one you will probably feel some interest. The New England Antislavery Society has celebrated its anniversary. Yesterday I was present at one of its meetings, and you may be gratified by some observations on its proceedings. Opposed as I am to slavery, I have never sympathized with the intolerant spirit of this class of its opposers; and from the most orthodox of the party I find, perhaps, little more favor than from the slaveholder, so that I may pass for an impartial witness. I was struck with what always surprises me on similar occasions, — with the extent to which the power of speaking in public is possessed in our country. I was surrounded by plain people, belonging to what is called the middle class, and yet it seemed as if no one was silent for want of the talent of giving utterance to his thoughts. I received the impression which I delight to receive of the intellectual energy of the mass of the people. . . .

"My principal object in attending it was to judge for myself of the spirit of this society. I wished to ascertain whether there was no diminution of the bitterness and intolerance of feeling which had characterized too many of its proceedings; and, on the whole, my impression was, that the party is improving by time, is gaining wisdom by experience. There was, indeed, a tendency to unsparing invective. In this respect, however, I heard nothing so exceptionable as the vituperations, and coarse, unfeeling personalities, which too often dishonor Congress; and can it be wondered at, when the highest deliberative bodies in the country are wanting in the spirit of Christians, and the courtesy of gentlemen, that a taint of coarseness should spread through the community?

"I may be told, that Abolitionists are not politicians, but men who accept Christianity as their only rule, and who construe its pacific precepts with uncommon rigor. I reply, that their inconsistency is the more flagrant on account of their profession; but still, that they are to be judged by the character of their times, and that hitherto the Christian world has made very little progress in

the divine art of assailing and overcoming evil. A good cause is continually made a cover for bad passions. Self-will, the desire of victory, the principle of self-exaltation, and the common propensity to carry our point by force, all find means of indulgence under the cloak of zeal for truth, for God, for humanity. Even the well disposed think it easier to drive than to persuade, and rely more on authority or vehemence than on reason. One would think, from the common style of controversy, that it was an established principle, that the surest way to bring over men to our opinion is to awaken their self-will, pride, and prejudices; that to offend is the royal road to conciliation; that to rouse the spirit of angry, obstinate self-defence is the means of conquering opposition. The tactics of theological and philanthropic champions still in use show us that we have yet to learn the sublimest of all arts, that of influencing generously and nobly moral and rational beings. The controvertist, who does not harden his opponent, and make him a worse man, is rarely found in the lists of religious or political warfare. I try the Abolitionists by the common standard, — and, much as their intolerance offends me, I know not that it greatly exceeds what is common in most other parties or sects, — and do not find them wanting.

“The most gratifying circumstance at the meeting was a short address from a colored man. His complexion led me to think he was of pure African blood, and his diction, his countenance, his gestures, his thoughts, his whole bearing, must have convinced every hearer that the African is a man in the highest sense of that word. I felt that he was a partaker with me of that humanity for which I unceasingly thank my Creator. I felt on this occasion, as I perhaps never felt before, what an amount of intellectual and moral energy is crushed, is lost to the human race, by slavery. Among the two or three millions doomed by this system to brutal ignorance, and denied the means of developing their powers, how many men and women are there, who, under the culture and self-respect which belong to American freedom, would become blessings and ornaments to society by their intelligence and virtue!

“I was much struck, at this meeting, with the life which seemed to possess its members. Nothing was said or done mechanically. There was no forced zeal, no effort of the leaders to whip up the lagging spirit of the mass. It is easy, on entering a meeting, to tell at once whether it is a living or dead one, — whether people have come together from habit, from a cold sense of propriety or duty, or from a deep, irresistible impulse. You know by instinct whether you are surrounded by life or death. This body was alive. I am sure, that, if the stirrers-up of mobs could have looked into



the souls of these Abolitionists, they would have seen the infinite folly of attempting to put them down by such persecutions as they can bring to bear on them. Nothing but the Inquisition, the stake, the scaffold, nothing but extermination, can do the work. . . .

“Another fact which struck me at this meeting was the absence of what is called the influential part of the community. Men of standing, as they are called, were not there. Abolitionism seems to make no progress in this class, nor will it, unless it should gain a party large enough in the middle and laboring ranks to be worth the notice of politicians, and then it will be amply repaid by courtesy and attention for the neglect it now receives. The harvest of Abolitionism is to be reaped among what are called the middle classes, and an engine of immense power has been put into their hands for this purpose by Governor M'Duffie, and other Southern politicians, who have taught that we, the rich and educated of the Free States, can keep our property and our political institutions only by making the great laboring portion of the community our slaves. This new Southern doctrine is as yet but imperfectly understood by the mass of our farmers, mechanics, and other workingmen. But the Abolitionists are wielding this weapon with zeal and effect, and are linking themselves more and more with the mass of the people.

“As to the future history of Abolitionism, I feel much uncertainty. Whether, if left to itself, if unaided by opposition, it will live and advance, I know not. The present moment is unpropitious to it. The people at large are swallowed up in gain, are intoxicated with promises of boundless wealth, are worshipping what they call prosperity. It concerns them little who is slave and who is free, or how the battles of liberty and truth are fought at home and abroad, provided they can drive some enormously profitable bargain, or bring some vast speculation to a successful issue. Men are too busy to think of Abolitionism, and will be apt to forget it, unless forced on their notice by violence. There is, indeed, one ground for believing that Abolitionism may endure, even if unopposed. With all its faults, it is founded essentially on religious conviction. It is thus bound up with the strongest principle of human nature. It will not, therefore, be easily discouraged by neglect. It will leave nothing untried to move the worldly multitude, and unexpected events may prepare a multitude for its influence.”

In the autumn of 1836, Dr. Channing found himself compelled once more to address the American public, with the hope of casting out the demon of persecution which possessed it. During the pre-

ceding session, Congress had outraged the right of petition, by refusing to receive memorials relating in any way to slavery, thus setting a fatal example to the whole country; and in July, a mob, instigated and even led on by some of the chief citizens of Cincinnati, had destroyed the press of "The Philanthropist," and driven its editor, James G. Birney, Esq., from the city. It was plain to him that a struggle for the very life of liberty of speech was begun; and his heart re-echoed the thrilling words of Whittier, —

"Now, when the padlocks for our lips are forging,  
Silence is crime."

He had written to a friend, the year before, in relation to his book on Slavery: "I never acted under a stronger conviction of duty than in publishing this book. My spirit preyed on itself, till I had spoken the truth." And now he could not feel at peace, till he had offered to Mr. Birney a public testimonial of respect for his integrity and sympathy for his sacrifices, and uttered an indignant remonstrance against the tame subservience with which a majority of Northern freemen were attempting to put a gag upon discussion. At the same time, he was most earnest to be *just* at once to the Abolitionists and to the slaveholders. In a letter to Dr. Follen, he thus manifests the impartial rectitude by which he was governed.

"*January, 1837.* The most interesting point to me on the Abolition question at this moment is, the real state of feeling at the South, the real motive for perpetuating slavery. If this be love of gain, I am prepared to speak as I have not. I wish one treatise might be devoted by some able man to this single subject. Nothing has such an influence in preventing a right action and feeling on slavery at the North as the belief that the evil is an inherited one, which the present generation are obliged to continue for their own safety, and which they would gladly escape. Let the truth be known. I have felt myself called to express a good hope of many slaveholders, not only to be just to them, but to counteract what has seemed to me the bad influence of the uncharitableness of the Abolitionists on the people here who have sided with the slaveholder as an injured man. I have wished that it might be seen, that utter abhorrence of slavery is reconcilable with justice to the master. If, however, we have been more than just, if we have been excessively, unreasonably lenient to the slaveholders, let the truth be told. If the basest of all motives is perpetuating the greatest of wrongs, then it is time to set the proofs of this enormity before the people."

It was during the winter of 1837, that the great battle in favor of

the Right of Petition was fought and won in Congress, by the venerable John Quincy Adams, amidst brutal insults, threats of violence, volleys of abuse, and the wiles and ambuscades of pettifogging politicians. Dr. Channing's views in regard to the *expediency* of using this right were thus expressed in a letter to Ellis Gray Loring, Esq.

“*March 11, 1837.* I wanted strength to talk freely last evening, and I felt, after you had left me, that I had given you a very imperfect statement of my views in relation to the subject of our conversation. Being confined to the house to-day, I will try to supply the deficiency by throwing a few thoughts upon paper.

“I have always doubted the expediency of agitating the subject of Abolitionism in Congress. I have petitioned once or twice for the abolition of slavery in the District; but my great motive for so doing was personal. I wished by some public act to disclaim all participation in the national guilt incurred by the continuance of slavery on that spot. I had no expectation of success; and having freed my conscience, I ceased from this mode of action. I have feared that the Antislavery cause would be thrown back by calling on Congress to forward it. This cause has two aspects:—first, the political; next, the moral, religious, philanthropic. It must be presented, as I think, under the last. The great obstruction to its progress is, that the people habitually view it under the first. Its political connections and bearings have got possession of men's minds, and shut out the higher views which alone can free the slave. . . .

“The agitation of the matter in Congress turns the majority of minds to the political aspect and political consequences of Abolitionism; and behind this banner the multitude are inaccessible to moral and philanthropic views of the subject. In these views, however, the strength of the cause lies. Whatever interrupts their agency is most pernicious.

“Antislavery is to triumph, not by force or appeals to interest, but by becoming a living part of the public conscience and religion. Just in proportion as it is complicated with political questions and feelings, it is shorn of its strength.

“If the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia were practicable, the expediency of the efforts now directed to that end would be less questionable. But I have never anticipated such a result. The South, united to a man, will always avail itself of party divisions at the North, sufficiently to secure a majority in Congress against such a measure. What makes this more certain is the deliberate purpose of the South to secede, in the event of the



union of the North in such legislative action. On this point, the South does not merely bluster, but is in earnest; and the knowledge that its mind is here fully made up, will always prevent such a union of Northern members. The efforts against slavery in the District cannot, then, accomplish their declared end. They can serve the cause only by drawing attention to it, keeping men alive to it; but if they lead men to view it in a false light, to overlook its highest claims, do they serve it?

“I augur no good from the political action of the Abolitionists. Their business is with the conscience; and they lose their power over this, just in proportion as they mix up their cause with party passions. The questions which they propose to candidates for office bring out hollow answers, and make hypocrites, who, of course, are less trustworthy than before, and cannot be held to their profession in critical seasons. There is a class of politicians who will use Abolitionism to rise by, but will disgrace it by want of principle. You owe your success, as far as you have succeeded, to your unworldly, spiritual devotion to a good cause, and no policy can take the place of this. I hear less said now of your fanaticism, and more of your want of moral purity. I ascribe the change to your political action.

“I know how idle it is to attempt to tie down a great movement by precise rules. The force which is to achieve great revolutions, to sweep away the abuses of ages, will be more or less wild. We must accept enthusiasm with its evil as well as its good, if we accept it at all. Antislavery will run its race, with little change of direction from admonitions of friend or foe. I cannot, however, help desiring that its fervor and deep feeling may be turned to the best account, — that no part of its force may be lost. I wish not to cripple it, but to increase its efficiency.

“I abstain from publishing these views, because I am unwilling, without plain necessity, to find fault with an injured party, and because Antislavery has no great love for advice. I have therefore given you my mind in this form, and if you think any of your number would be interested by this letter, you are at liberty to communicate it to them.

“Your friend.”

It will be seen from the foregoing letter, that Dr. Channing was chiefly desirous to awaken the hearts of his countrymen to the great spiritual truths involved in the Antislavery movement, and was fearful that the whole tone of feeling and action in regard to our great national sin and shame would be debased by the intermixture of political jealousies and intrigues. In fact, his cherished hope was, that Abolitionism — asserting as it did the very funda-

mental principles of justice, the essential rights of every human being, and the universal law of love — would widen and grow up into a *Church* of Practical Christianity, by whose influence the whole nation might be regenerated. A few letters written at various intervals will yet further illustrate his views.

“*Boston, July 29, 1836.*<sup>1</sup> Your letter of April 1st was very cheering to me. I felt that I had not labored in vain in my little work on Slavery. My aim was to oppose slavery on principles which, if admitted, would inspire resistance to all the wrongs, and reverence for all the rights, of human nature. I have no doubt as to the triumph of these principles, and my confidence is founded not on events, on outward progress, so much as on the power with which they work on my mind. In the response of my own soul to any great, unchangeable truth, I hear the voice of universal humanity. I can conceive that my feelings are individual, but not any great convictions of the intellect, or lofty inspirations of the heart. These do not belong to me. They are universal. They will live and spread, when the individual who gave some faint utterance to them is gone.”

“*May 9, 1837.*<sup>2</sup> I feel strongly, that, by preaching Christianity in its length and breadth, by bringing out its true spirit clearly, powerfully, in the language of deep conviction, we are advancing the Antislavery cause most effectually. Men will apply the truth so taught in a case like the present; that is, when a whole community are alive to a great subject. The common difficulty is, that great principles are not unfolded and enforced with a true understanding and profound feeling on the part of the preacher. Let him do his part, and the people generally may be left to make the application. I am less anxious that Antislavery should be preached, than that the spirit of Christianity should be set forth with clearness and energy. The great service which Antislavery is to do, is to reveal this spirit with a new life and power.

“This is a greater work than to liberate the slave. There is something more terrible than slavery, and that is the spirit which enslaves. This spirit is in us all, is as strong in many who condemn as in those who uphold slavery. Let the axe be laid to the root of the tree. I do not mean that particular evils are never to be assailed. Far from it; but the great way to assail them is to strike at their principle. The Abolitionists are to do vastly more good by establishing principles than by attacking abuses. It is easy to do the last. Few can do the first. It is the insane love of

<sup>1</sup> To J. Blanco White.

<sup>2</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.

money pervading the trading world which rivets the chains of the slave, — that covetousness against which Jesus spoke in language of such fearful energy. Some hope that the present convulsion in the commercial community is to do good. It will, if it leads men to comprehend the great principle on which wealth is to be reared. The effect of mere suffering will be very temporary.”

“*December 25, 1837.*<sup>1</sup> I have just read the account of the Abolition debate. I cannot acquiesce in any restriction on the right of petition; but I must say that I anticipate no good from the agitation of the question of slavery in Congress. I look wholly to moral and religious influences for the removal of this evil, and I fear that these are weakened by bringing the subject before the national legislature. I wish to avoid awakening political passions and prejudices, or stirring up political action on the matter. The great obstruction to antislavery sentiments at the North is the fear of dissolving the Union; and this fear gains strength from excitements in Congress about slavery. I petitioned for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, without the least hope of success, but simply to relieve myself from all responsibility for this outrage on human rights. It is certain that the South will command votes enough in the Free States to continue the present state of things, until the latter shall be thoroughly moved with the antislavery spirit. Is it, then, best for the country or for Abolition to persevere in efforts which must fail, which disturb the Union without any counterbalancing good, and which interfere with the only labors from which success must be hoped? I would have the legislature of Massachusetts protest against slavery in the District, declare itself free from the guilt of the system, and at the same time declare, that, as resistance to it is now hopeless, we shall abstain until better times to remonstrate against it, remonstrance bringing only evil. I wish the Abolitionists would look at the matter calmly. That the cause is injured North and South, by the present course in regard to the District, I fear.”

Though Dr. Channing's wish to concentrate the attention of his fellow-citizens upon the principles of humanity, which were the life of the Antislavery movement, was thus strong, he was yet awake to the importance of limiting the growth of the slave power, and most anxious to break the yoke which it had so skilfully imposed on Northern freemen. It was in this year of 1837 that he saw the urgent necessity of making a determined political resistance to the grasping spirit of the faction of slaveholders. The Texas

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.



plot — generated by subtle policy and slowly matured by worldliness — was born. The designs of an unlimited extension of the slave system, by means of a professedly free government, was asserted with unblushing effrontery as the fulfilment of our national destiny. From the time when the devoted Benjamin Lundy first exposed the nefarious project of the dismemberment of Mexico, all Antislavery men had been in a measure prepared for the coming struggle. But in 1837 the lamentable fact became evident, that political profligacy had insinuated its fatal corruptions into the very heart of Congress and the Administration; and again Dr. Channing heard himself summoned by the stern call of duty to break off the train of his favorite thoughts, and, though sick and weak, to make one more effort to rouse in his countrymen the spirit of freemen. In July, 1837, he wrote thus to Dr. Tuckerman: —

“I am engaged in an important work. I have been thinking for some time, that, if nobody would write about the annexation of Texas to this country, I must do it; and since Mr. Phillips left me I have been as busy as a beaver, and made such progress, that, if my strength holds out, I shall finish my work by the beginning of the next week. It will be a very serious affair, and I need counsel. I should like to read it to you and Mr. Phillips. Has he gone, or will he be in Boston? Can you think of any other person who should hear it? I have thought of Mr. Mann. If I come the next week, it will be only for a day. Nothing is to be said of my labors, for I shall not publish, unless, after consultation, I see my way clear. I shall provoke hostilities such as I have never met. But no matter. I am doing right.”

On the 30th of July, he thus announced the completion of his task: —

“My work is done, save a short conclusion. I have given to it more time than was good for me, but I supposed it should appear at once, and I thank God for strength to do it. How it will seem to me, when I read it over deliberately, I cannot tell. It now seems to me fitted to its end.”

The Letter to Mr. Clay was immediately published, and for the time averted the threatened wrong. The gratification which Dr. Channing felt at the accomplishment of his work appears in the following letter, which is of interest, also, as showing his moderate estimate of his success and his wise forecast.

“*September 12, 1837.*<sup>1</sup> Your letter received yesterday gave me great pleasure. I rejoice that you, with others in whom I confide,

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.

think my Letter fitted to its end. That it should do any good ought, perhaps, to surprise me, when I think of my unfitness for the work. How painful, that I should be driven to a task lying beyond my province, by the unwillingness of others to undertake it! My success does not make me forget that I have done very little, and that much remains to be done. The Letter ought to be followed up by an able exposure of the arguments in favor of the annexation of Texas. Who will do this? I had no time to take up this part of the subject, for I deferred writing till just before the session of Congress, and it was thought important that the Letter should appear immediately. I feel, too, how much more ably this branch may be treated by some one in active or public life.

“I have had the means of ascertaining some of the objections which will be made to my Letter, and of the arguments in favor of annexation. 1. All design on the part of the South and West to subjugate Texas, especially for the extension of slavery, is disclaimed, and will be indignantly disclaimed. 2. The design of annexing Texas to us, previously to the recognition of its independence by Mexico, will be disclaimed by many who yet are bent on the annexation. I suppose the public feeling against the measure will lead to new efforts on the part of our government to secure the recognition by Mexico. 3. The great argument is, that Texas, being independent, will be a slave country, and that there will be more and more slavery in it separated from us than united. It will be said, that the United States, anxious to supply that market, will exclude slaves from Africa. This is a consideration worth looking at. 4. In case of the annexation, it will be maintained that the ascendancy of the population will remain with the Free States. 5. The dangers or evils of an independent English state in that quarter will be dwelt upon. You undoubtedly meet with other arguments in the papers at New York. I should like to know them all. Is there no one to go over the ground calmly, ably?”

Dr. Channing thus prophetically sketched the sure results of our national crime: —

“By this act, our country will enter on a career of encroachment, war, and crime, and will merit and incur the punishment and woe of aggravated wrong-doing. The seizure of Texas will not stand alone. It will darken our future history. It will be linked by an iron necessity to long-continued deeds of rapine and blood. Ages may not see the catastrophe of the tragedy, the first scene of which we are so ready to enact. . . . Texas is a country conquered by

our citizens; and the annexation of it to our Union will be the beginning of conquests, which, unless arrested and beaten back by a just and kind Providence, will stop only at the Isthmus of Darien. Henceforth, we must cease to cry, Peace, peace. Our eagle will whet, not gorge, its appetite on its first victim; and will snuff a more tempting quarry, more alluring blood, in every new region which opens southward. To annex Texas is to declare perpetual war with Mexico. . . . Texas is the first step to Mexico. The moment we plant our authority on Texas, the boundaries of those two countries will become nominal, will be little more than lines on the sand of the sea-shore. . . . Can Mexico look without alarm on the approaches of this ever-growing tide? Is she prepared to be a passive prey, — to shrink and surrender without a struggle? Is she not strong in her hatred, if not in her fortresses or skill, — strong enough to make war a dear and bloody game? . . . Even were the dispositions of our government most pacific and opposed to encroachment, the annexation of Texas would almost certainly embroil us with Mexico. . . . Have we counted the cost of establishing and making perpetual these hostile relations with Mexico? Will wars, begun in rapacity, carried on so far from the centre of the confederation, and of consequence little checked or controlled by Congress, add strength to our institutions, or cement our union, or exert a healthy moral influence on rulers or people? What limits can be set to the atrocities of such conflicts? What limits to the treasures which must be lavished on such distant borders? What limits to the patronage and power which such distant expeditions must accumulate in the hands of the Executive? Are the blood and hard-earned wealth of the older States to be poured out like water, to protect and revenge a new people, whose character and condition will plunge them into perpetual wrongs?"<sup>1</sup>

In his Letter to Mr. Clay,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Channing has so fully explained his views in regard to the annexation of Texas, that there is but one point upon which anything remains to be added. He foresaw in the successful accomplishment of this nefarious project the *destruction of the national bond of union*. In this emergency, his mind was perfectly made up as to duty, as all knew who were intimate with him. He but expressed his calm, deliberate, unfaltering purpose, when he declared, —

"For one, I say that, earnestly as I deprecate the separation of these States, and though this event would disappoint most cherished hopes for my country, still I can submit to it more readily

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. II. pp. 204-209. One Volume Edition, pp. 760-762.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. pp. 183-260. One Volume Edition, pp. 752-781.



than to the reception of Texas into the confederacy. I shrink from that contamination. I shrink from an act which is to pledge us as a people to robbery and war, to the work of upholding and extending slavery without limitation or end. I do not desire to share the responsibility, or to live under the laws of a government adopting such a policy, and swayed by such a spirit, as would be expressed by the incorporation of Texas with our country.”<sup>1</sup>

“To me it seems not only the right, but the duty, of the Free States, in case of the annexation of Texas, to say to the Slaveholding States, ‘We regard this act as the dissolution of the Union. The essential conditions of the national compact are violated.’”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Channing valued the Union, indeed, as an “inestimable good, to be prized not merely or chiefly for its commercial benefits or any pecuniary advantages, but simply as Union.”<sup>3</sup> To him it was not “a Means, but an End, . . . our highest national interest, next to liberty, . . . to which everything should be yielded but truth, honor, and liberty.”<sup>4</sup> But at the same time his conviction was clear, that when by this union “the most sacred rights and dearest interests of humanity” were violated, then it “would be bought at too dear a rate; then it would be changed from a virtuous bond into a league of crime and shame.”<sup>5</sup> And he summed up his solemn determination in these emphatic words: “We will not become partners in your wars with Mexico and Europe, in your schemes of spreading and perpetuating slavery, in your hopes of conquest, in your unrighteous spoils. . . . A pacific division in the first instance seems to me to threaten less contention than a lingering, feverish dissolution of the Union, such as must be expected under this fatal innovation.”<sup>6</sup> Dr. Channing was no boaster; he was as firm as he was moderate; and, had he lived, he would unquestionably have put forth his full power to make good these words. It is but justice to him, therefore, to record, that in private conversation he never bated one jot or tittle from these uncompromising declarations of duty.

It was in the autumn of this year, 1837, that Dr. Channing’s faith and firmness were put to a somewhat severe test. On the 7th of November, the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, editor of the *Alton Observer*, in Illinois, was shot by one of a mob, while defending the building containing his press. This event, so fitly consummating

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. II. p. 238. One Volume Edition, p. 773.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237. *Ibid.*, p. 773.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VI., p. 333. *Ibid.*, p. 891.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II. p. 144. *Ibid.*, p. 739.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II. p. 238. *Ibid.*, p. 773.

the long series of outrages committed or tolerated against the Abolitionists, excited a profound sensation. Even those whose caution, social connections, and business interests had hitherto made them hostile or indifferent to the Antislavery movement, were startled. And the occasion seemed the right one, therefore, to arouse the people to a consciousness of their duties as freemen.

In a conversation with a friend, Samuel E. Sewall, Esq., Dr. Channing suggested the plan of a meeting of the citizens of Boston in Faneuil Hall, to protest against the lawless violence which had at length resulted in the destruction of life. A petition to the city government was accordingly drawn up by that gentleman for the use of Faneuil Hall, and having been headed by Dr. Channing, and the requisite number of signers obtained, was presented. It was immediately followed by a counter petition numerously signed. In this dark day, the taint of "Abolitionism" was so much dreaded, especially in large trading communities, that influential men readily came forward to oppose even an expression of indignant remonstrance against the violence under which Abolitionists had suffered. Under their influence the hall was refused, and from considerations which will appear in the subsequent documents. Thus an issue was made for freedom of speech and the supremacy of law, in which Dr. Channing found himself most unexpectedly involved as a principal.

The results of this contest were important in their silent operation on public opinion. They were important also, in a personal point of view, for many of the early and near friends of Dr. Channing fell away from him. The absurd notion was originated, at this time, that he intended to change his calling for a political one. The coldness toward him which then began to manifest itself was never entirely removed; and suspicions with regard to the purity of his aim were cherished by a few, even to the end of his life. They could not comprehend the depth of his desire to make religion the controlling principle in all human affairs. This experience was instructive, too, to himself, and though he had always regarded public events from a religious point of view, yet thenceforward he looked more to the direct application of Christianity to social and political life. He said soon afterward to a friend, that he was glad of what had occurred, as it had enabled him to give a practical manifestation of opinions which might otherwise have been considered merely theoretical.

On the second of December, the following appeal was published in the Boston Daily Advertiser, prefaced by some editorial remarks sustaining the course of the city government.

“ TO THE CITIZENS OF BOSTON.

“ I feel that I owe it to my fellow-citizens and myself, to offer some remarks on the proceedings of the Board of Aldermen, in relation to a petition presented to them for the use of Faneuil Hall, in order that there might be an expression of public sentiment in regard to the late ferocious assault on the liberty of the press at Alton. Had I for a moment imagined that, by placing my name at the head of this petition, I was to bring myself before the public as I have done, I should have been solicitous to avoid the distinction. But the past cannot be recalled; and having performed this act from a conviction of duty, I cannot regret it. My only desire is, that its true character may be understood by my fellow-citizens, who will not, I believe, when they know the truth, give the sanction of their approbation to the proceedings of the government.

“ The petition was as follows : —

“ BOSTON, Nov. 27, 1837.

“ *To the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Boston.*

“ ‘The undersigned, citizens of Boston, request that the use of Faneuil Hall may be granted to them on Monday evening, Dec. 4th, for the purpose of holding a public meeting to notice in a suitable manner the recent murder, in the city of Alton, of a native of New England, and citizen of the free State of Illinois, who fell in defence of the freedom of the press.’

“ This petition was rejected by the Board of Aldermen, on the ground, that the resolutions which might be passed at the proposed meeting would not express the public opinion of the city, and would even create a disgraceful confusion in Faneuil Hall, or, in other words, would excite a mob. I need not say to those who know me, that I am incapable of proposing a measure which should seem to me fitted to expose the city to tumult. The truth is, that the possibility of such an occurrence did not enter my thoughts. The object of the proposed meeting was so obvious, so unexceptionable, so righteous, and had such claims on every friend of order and liberty, that I did not pause a moment when I was requested to sign the petition. I should have pronounced it impossible that a man of common sense and common honesty could view and pass over the tragedy of Alton as a matter touching merely the interests of one or another party. To me it had a character of its own, which stood out in terrible relief. I saw in it systematic, deliberate murder, for the destruction of the freedom of the press. The petition was presented for one purpose and one only, — namely, that the



good people of Boston might manifest in the most solemn and impressive manner their deep abhorrence of the spirit of mobs which threatens all our institutions, and particularly might express their utter, uncompromising reprobation of the violence which has been offered to the freedom of speech and the press. The Freedom of the Press, — the sacredness of this right, — the duty of maintaining it against all assaults, — this was the great idea to which the meeting was intended to give utterance. I was requested to prepare the resolutions; and I was meditating this work when I heard the decision of the Board of Aldermen. My single aim was, to frame such resolutions as should pledge all who should concur in them to the exertion of their whole influence for the suppression of mobs, for the discouragement of violence, for the vindication of the supremacy of the laws, and especially for the assertion and defence of the freedom of the press. My intention was, to exclude all reference to parties, all topics about which there could be a division among the friends of liberty. No other resolutions could have been drawn up in consistency with the petition; and the Board of Aldermen had no right to expect any others.

“To intimate that such resolutions would not express the public opinion of Boston, and would even create a mob, is to pronounce the severest libel on this city. It is to assert that peaceful citizens cannot meet here in safety to strengthen and pledge themselves against violence and in defence of the dearest and most sacred rights. And has it come to this? Has Boston fallen so low? May not its citizens be trusted to come together to express the great principles of liberty, for which their fathers died? Are our fellow-citizens to be *murdered* in the act of defending their property, and of asserting the right of free discussion; and is it unsafe in this metropolis, once the refuge of liberty, to express abhorrence of the deed? If such be our degradation, we ought to know the awful truth; and those among us who retain a portion of the spirit of our ancestors should set themselves to work to recover their degenerate posterity. But I do not believe in this degeneracy. The people of Boston may be trusted. There is a moral soundness in this community on the great points involved in the petition which has been rejected. There is among us a deep abhorrence of the spirit of violence which is spreading through our land; and from this city ought to go forth a voice to awaken the whole country to its danger, to the growing peril of the substitution of lawless force for the authority of the laws. This, in truth, was the great object of those who proposed the meeting, to bring out a loud, general expression of opinion and feeling, which would awe the spirit of

mobs, and would especially secure the press from violence. Instead of this, what is Boston now doing? Into what scale is this city now thrown? Boston now says to Alton, 'Go on; destroy the press; put down the liberty of speech; and, still more, murder the citizen who asserts it; and no united voice shall here be lifted up against you, lest a like violence should break forth among ourselves.'

"It is this view of the rejection of the petition which deeply moves me. That a petition bearing my name should be denied, would not excite a moment's thought or feeling. But that this city, which I have been proud to call my home, should be so exhibited to the world, and should exert this disastrous influence on the country, — this I cannot meet with indifference.

"I earnestly hope that my fellow-citizens will demand the public meeting which has been refused, with a voice which cannot be denied; but, unless so called, I do not desire that it should be held. If not demanded by acclamation, it would very possibly become a riot. A government which announces its expectation of a mob does virtually, though unintentionally, summon a mob, and would then cast all the blame of it on the 'rash men' who might become its victims.

"But is there no part of our country, where a voice of power shall be lifted up in defence of rights incomparably more precious than the temporary interests which have often crowded Faneuil Hall to suffocation? Is the whole country to sleep? An event has occurred which ought to thrill the hearts of this people as the heart of one man. A martyr to the freedom of the press has fallen among us. A citizen has been *murdered* in defence of the right of free discussion. I do not ask whether he was a Christian or unbeliever, whether he was Abolitionist or Colonizationist. He has been *murdered* in exercising what I hold to be the dearest right of the citizen. Nor is this a solitary act of violence. It is the consummation of a long series of assaults on public order, on freedom, on the majesty of the laws. I ask, Is there not a spot in the country whence a voice of moral reprobation, of patriotic remonstrance, of solemn warning, shall go forth to awaken the slumbering community? There are, indeed, in various places, meetings of Anti-slavery societies, to express their sorrow for a fallen brother. But in these I take no part. What I desired was, that the citizens of Boston, of all parties, should join as one man in putting down the reign of terror by the force of opinion, and in spreading a shield over our menaced liberties. I felt, that the very fact, that the majority of the people here are opposed to the peculiar opinions of

our murdered fellow-citizen, would give increased authority to our condemnation of this ferocious deed.

“The principles on which I have acted in this affair are such as have governed my whole life. This is not the first time in which I have come forward to defend the freedom of opinion, the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press. Not a few of my fellow-citizens will bear witness to the sincerity of my devotion to this cause. The rights of a human being to inquire, to judge, and to express his honest conviction, — these are dear to me as life ; and if I ask a distinction in society, it is that of being the defender of these. I cannot, I will not, tamely and silently, see these trampled down in the person of a fellow-citizen, be he rich or poor, be he friend or foe, be he the advocate or the opposer of what I deem the truth.

“That in these sentiments I have the sympathy of my fellow-citizens, I cannot doubt. I am confident that, when the true import of the petition which I have signed is understood, the vast majority will agree with me in the fitness of the action which it was intended to promote. I have no distrust of my fellow-citizens. They are true to the principles of liberty ; and the time, I hope, is near, when the stain now thrown on our ancient and free city will be wiped away, — when a petition, headed by a worthier name, will assemble the wise and good, the friends of order and liberty, of all sects and parties, to bear their solemn testimony against the spirit of misrule and violence, to express their devotion to the laws, and their unconquerable purpose to maintain the freedom of speech and of the press.

“WM. E. CHANNING.”

The issue thus made with the city authorities was rendered still more complicated by the fact that the municipal election was close at hand. This caused the motives of men who took an active part in the affair to be regarded with party jealousy. No effort, however, it is just to say, was put forth by either party to create “political capital” out of the question.

In answer to the appeal, a gathering of citizens was held, on the evening of December 3d, in the old Supreme Court room, — a room not large, but crowded on that occasion, — to consider “the reasons assigned by the Mayor and Aldermen for withholding the use of Faneuil Hall, and to act in the premises as they might deem expedient.” Resolutions were adopted concerning the freedom of the press and of discussion, and the right of the people peaceably to assemble. It was also resolved to circulate widely through the city the same petition, headed as before by William E. Channing, with only a change in the time of the meeting. Before adjourning, the following expression of respect was passed : —



“*Resolved*, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the Rev. William E. Channing for the eloquent, elevated, and dignified vindication he has made, in his published Address, of the right of the citizens to assemble together for the purpose of ‘pledging themselves against violence, and in defence of the dearest and most sacred rights’; and that he be requested by this meeting to prepare the resolutions to be presented at the proposed meeting in Faneuil Hall on the 8th instant.”

The city authorities immediately signified their willingness, without waiting to test the number of names, to open the hall, and it was under these circumstances that the meeting was held, at ten o’clock on the morning of December 8th. The large hall, capable of holding five thousand persons, was crowded early. On all sides were earnest and anxious faces. The Hon. Jonathan Phillips, Dr. Channing’s intimate friend, was called to preside. A prayer was offered by the Rev. E. M. P. Wells, who knelt on the platform before the assembly; and then Dr. Channing addressed the meeting with the following remarks, which he had previously prepared and committed to memory. Some of the sentiments at first called forth a strong expression of applause, which the speaker checked, by begging his fellow-citizens to evince their approbation by their silent attention. The request was instantly complied with.

“Mr. Chairman, — My relation to this meeting not only authorizes, but requires, me to offer, at its commencement, some remarks on the purpose for which we are now assembled. It is not, indeed, without reluctance, that I rise to speak in a place, and under circumstances, to me so new and unusual; but I am commanded to make this effort by a voice which I cannot disobey, by a sense of what I owe to myself, to this community, and to the cause of freedom.

“I know that there are those who say that this is not my place, — that my voice should be heard only in the holy temples of religion. I ask, Is there nothing holy here? Was there nothing holy in the spirit of our fathers, when within these walls they invoked the blessing of God on their struggles for freedom? Every place may be made holy by holy deeds. Nothing, nothing, Sir, would tempt me to come here to mingle in the conflicts of party. But when a great question of humanity and justice is discussed here, when a number of my fellow-citizens meet here to lift up their voices against violence and murder, and in support of the laws and the press, I feel that my place is *here*.

“I rise simply to state the object of this meeting. It has been

misrepresented, — I do not say intentionally. I do not come here to charge any of my fellow-citizens with unworthy motives. But there has been misrepresentation. You have been told that the professed object of the meeting is not its real one; that it was called to serve the purposes of a party; that it is an imposition. I grieve that this language has been used. It shows how little faith man has in man, how slow he is to ascribe good purposes to his brother, how prone to see by-ends and bad ends in honorable undertakings. Sir, there does exist such a thing as purity of purpose. It is possible for a man to desire freedom, not only for himself, but for his whole race. It is possible for a man to desire that the laws may guard, not only his own possessions, but the rights of every human being; and when laws and rights and freedom are trodden under foot, not once, but again and again, and with increasing fury, it is possible for a man sincerely to feel that he ought to meet with those of a like mind, and bear testimony with them against these atrocities. Sir, are not here motives enough and of sufficient force to bring men together, and to crowd this hall, — motives enough, and more than enough, to explain this meeting? And why, then, look beyond these, — why look for others and base ones?

“I can say with confidence, Sir, that this meeting had a good origin. Call it unwise, if you will; but its purpose was pure, was generous, and worthy of Christian freemen. I claim to know something of its origin; for I believe no one had more to do with calling it than myself. Soon after the recent tragedy at Alton, I was called upon, and requested to deliver a discourse on that sad event. For various reasons, I declined so to do. I said to the friend who made the request, and I said it from my own mind, and without any hint from another, that I wished that the citizens of Boston would, in some public manner, express their abhorrence of the lawless spirit which had prompted to this and kindred deeds, and which had broken out here as well as at a distance. On the next day a petition was sent me, embodying the suggestion which I had made the evening before. To this petition I affixed my name. In signing it, my great apprehension was, that the absorption of our citizens in their private affairs would make them indifferent to the subject, so that a meeting sufficiently numerous for the desired impression might not be obtained. The idea of opposition to it did not enter my thoughts, and up to this hour I find a difficulty in comprehending, in making real to myself, the opposition it has excited. I signed the petition with the full understanding that the meeting should bear no relation to party, but should comprehend

all citizens, of whatever sect or party, whose spirits had been stirred, as mine was, by the fearful progress of lawless force.

“On me, then, Sir, not a little of the responsibility of this meeting rests. I owe it to truth and honor to avow it, and I am ready to bear this responsibility. I have no misgivings. I have a distinct consciousness, that the part which I act becomes a man, a citizen, and a Christian. I am willing that the report of what I am doing should go through the length and breadth of the land. I am willing it should cross the ocean. I care not how far, how wide, it is known, that, at this moment of increasing peril from lawless force, I labored to bring my fellow-citizens together, in order that, by a solemn public act, they might help to put down civil convulsion and bloodshed, — might assert the insulted supremacy of the laws, and might pledge themselves to sustain the endangered rights of the citizen. Sir, it is not impossible that the report of this meeting may cross the ocean, and may form a part of the enduring records of this city. I trust that it will not detract from the glory of our beloved city. I trust that the gentlemen who are now to address you will feel the dignity, the sacredness, of this occasion. I trust that they will rise above all local, personal, party considerations. I rejoice that the opening of this hall to us by the fathers of our city has put to rest one question which lately excited us, and I trust that no reference to this will disturb our harmony. In a word, I trust that this assembly will speak a language worthy of Boston; and worthy of those illustrious men, who, in times that tried men’s souls, made these walls echo with their thrilling voices, and left here a testimony, which will never die, to the principles of freedom.”

The following resolutions, written by Dr. Channing, were then presented to the meeting by Benjamin F. Hallet, Esq. : —

“*Resolved*, That our civil and religious liberties, which have come down to us from our fathers, sealed with their blood, are a most precious bequest, and that, when liberty is invaded, this consecrated hall is the chosen spot where its friends should meet together to pledge themselves to its support.

“*Resolved*, That we are assembled here to assume the badge of no party, to narrow ourselves to no local or temporary interests, but to maintain the supremacy of the laws, and to give expression and support to those universal principles of justice and freedom on which popular institutions and the hopes of philanthropy rest.

“*Resolved*, That it has pleased God to commit to this people, above all others, the cause of human freedom; that we are called



to the high office of manifesting the power of free institutions to ennoble and bless a people ; and that, in proving false to this trust, we shall not only cast away our own happiness, but shall betray the interests of the human race, and shall deserve the condemning sentence of all nations and of future times. . . . .

“ *Resolved*, That among our rights we hold none more dear than the freedom of speech and the press ; that we look to this as the guardian of all other rights and the chief spring of human improvement ; so that to wrest it from the citizen, by violence and murder, is to inflict the deepest wound on the republic. . . . .

“ *Resolved*, That it is the fundamental idea of the freedom of speech and the press, that the citizen shall be protected from violence, in uttering opinions opposed to those which prevail around him ; that if by such freedom nothing more were intended than the liberty of publishing what none would deny, then absolute governments might boast of it as loudly as republics ; so that to put the citizen in peril, on the ground that he presumptuously perseveres in uttering what is unpopular, or what the majority do not approve, is to assail this freedom in its very foundation, and to destroy its very life.

“ *Resolved*, That, in a free country, the laws, enacted according to the prescriptions of the constitution, are the voice of the people, and are the only forms by which the sovereignty of the people is exercised and expressed ; and that of consequence a mob, or a combination of citizens for the purpose of suspending by force the administration of the laws, or of taking away rights which these have guaranteed, is treason against the people, a contempt of their sovereignty, and deserves to be visited with exemplary punishment.

“ *Resolved*, That the spirit of mobs is a spirit of indiscriminate destruction ; that, when the press shall have become its prey, its next victim will be property ; that there is no power on earth so terrible as human passion, unbridled by principle and law, and inflamed to madness by the sympathies of a crowd ; and that, if we silently and passively abandon any portion of our fellow-citizens to this power, we shall have no right to complain when our own turn shall come to feed its rapaciousness and fury.

“ *Resolved*, That in this country the mightiest influence is public opinion ; that mobs cannot prevail without a criminal apathy in the public mind ; that one of the darkest omens of our times is the indifference with which the nation has looked on the triumphs of lawless force ; and that the time is now come for this people to shake off their lethargy, to vindicate the insulted majesty of the laws, and

to pronounce a sentence on unprincipled violence, which the reckless and turbulent will be unable to withstand.

*“Resolved,* That when a fellow-citizen has been destroyed in defending property and the press, it is alike weak and criminal to reproach him as responsible for the deed, because he refused to surrender his undoubted rights at the command of his murderers; that with equal justice the highwayman may throw the blame of his crime on the slaughtered traveller, who refuses, when summoned, to surrender his purse; and even if our fellow-citizen, who recently fell in defence of the freedom of the press, was driven by the violence which assailed him into rash and injudicious deeds, we are bound so to express our grief as in no degree to screen his lawless assailants from the reprobation which is their due.

*“Resolved,* That the Christian is not authorized by his religion to look with indifference on public affairs, and that he ought particularly to be roused by acts of cruelty and violence, which degrade our country to the level of heathenism.

*“Resolved,* That we deem this occasion too solemn for the language of passion; that we have come to this place to establish and diffuse the principles of order and peace; that we acknowledge our obligation to cherish in the community a spirit of mutual forbearance and good-will; and that we earnestly desire, whilst we vindicate the rights of speech and the press, that these may be most conscientiously exercised, in obedience to the dictates of justice and philanthropy.

*“Resolved,* That our affection for our country is undiminished by the public crimes by which it is dishonored; that we implore for it the blessing of Almighty God; and that we pledge ourselves, according to our power, to sustain its laws, to give stability to its union, and to transmit its free institutions unimpaired to posterity.”

These resolutions were supported by George S. Hillard, Esq., in a speech which was listened to with great attention, and which was pronounced in the papers of the day to have been “fervid in eloquence, chaste in language, and noble in sentiment.” Its effect was at once elevating and soothing. The vast multitude seemed to be of one mind, and all signs betokened a meeting in the highest degree honorable to the old “Cradle of Liberty.” But the powers of evil purposed otherwise. The respectful order was but a delusive calm. One third of the persons assembled, perhaps, were Abolitionists or free-discussionists; another third were curious on-lookers, eager chiefly for excitement, and swayed to and fro by every speaker; but there was also a party gathered there, at once from counting-rooms and cellars, who were deadly foes to the Antislavery

movement, and only waiting a fit chance for outbreak. The occasion came. The Attorney-General mounted the platform. He pronounced the resolutions to be, so far as he had heard them, "abstract propositions"; said that "it would be idle and useless to call this great meeting of the citizens together merely to affirm by solemn vote what nobody would have the hardihood to deny"; demanded to know how Mr. Lovejoy had merited the distinction of being thus commemorated; accused him of inciting the slaves to rise upon their masters; compared the slaves to wild beasts thirsting for blood; asked whether "that man had not died as the fool dieth"; likened the mob of Alton to the fathers of the Revolution; and wound up by saying, "to sympathize with those who have been mobbed, and whose own rashness and imprudence have incited the mob, is not the best way to put down mobs."<sup>1</sup> This speech, of course, awakened the latent emotions of all parties, and shouts of approval, and hisses of contempt, alternately drowned each other.

It was in the midst of this uproar that the chairman, turning to his friend, said, with a smile, "Can you stand thunder?" "Such thunder as this," was the answer, "in any measure." Dr. Channing was sitting at the time upon the platform, and looking down over the surging waves of the excited crowd with undisturbed serenity. For a few moments it seemed doubtful what would be the result of this appeal from one of the highest officers of the State to popular prejudice and passion. And then it was that there occurred a scene which always remained bright in Dr. Channing's memory. Wendell Phillips, Esq., a young lawyer, whose rare powers of commanding and brilliant eloquence were then unknown, and who had no influence to sustain him but associations connected with the honored family of which he was a branch, took the stage. He began by expressing his "surprise at the sentiments of the last speaker, — surprise, not only at such sentiments from such a man, but at the applause they had elicited within these walls." Attempts were made to silence the bold youth, but on he went until he reached this climax of his philippic. "I thought those pictured lips," pointing to the portraits in the hall, "would have broken into voice to rebuke the recreant American, the slanderer of the dead. The gentleman said, that he should sink into insignificance, if he dared to gainsay the principles of these resolutions. Sir, for the sentiments he has uttered, on soil consecrated by the prayers of Puritans and the blood of patriots, the earth should have yawned and swallowed him up." Here the tumult of applause and counter-

<sup>1</sup> The Daily Advocate, December 9th, 1837.



applause became deafening, and some time elapsed before order could be restored. Dr. Channing frequently referred to the tone, look, gesture, with which this young man, beaming with truth, upborne by justice, strong in rectitude, careless of consequences, in the hall consecrated by grand associations, and before a vast assembly of fellow-citizens, half hostile to freedom, poured forth the vial of his indignation, as "morally sublime." That brave deed commanded unwilling respect from all, and won the day. The Hon. William Sturgis had already, in an earlier part of Mr. Phillips's remarks, bespoken for him a fair hearing, thus throwing the weight of his high commercial character on the right side; and George Bond, Esq., justly respected by the community for business energy and Christian charity, now followed up the speech in a most manly, generous, direct appeal to the consciences and hearts of the assembly. The vote was then taken, and the resolutions were adopted by a large majority. And so "*free discussion of the subject of free discussion*" was secured in Boston. "Stout men, my husband for one," wrote a spectator of this scene, "came home that day and 'lifted up their voices and wept.' Dr. Channing did not know how dangerous an experiment—as people count danger—he ventured. *We* knew that we must send the children out of town, and sleep in our day-garments that night, unless free discussion prevailed."

On the 25th of December, Dr. Channing thus summed up the history of this eventful struggle in a letter to Dr. Follen:—

"I send you an account of the proceedings at Faneuil Hall, as you desire. I gave the movers of it to understand that I should not speak; but when I found that the opposition to the meeting made it difficult to get speakers, I felt myself bound to give up my objections, and to say a few words. I little expected, when I signed the petition, to get myself into a fray; but the path of duty was plain; and a man ought not to talk of difficulty when he sees clearly the right. Good was done to myself; but I am not sure that much was done to others."

Dr. Channing's course, in relation to the Faneuil Hall meeting, identified him before the public with the "Abolitionists" proper, as he had never been before; and the consciousness of this added claim to their confidence, as well as an increased sense of responsibility for the conduct of the Antislavery movement, made him desire to address to them some words of counsel. That he had meditated such a communication even earlier appears from the following letter.

“*Newport, October 26, 1837.*<sup>1</sup> There is one subject on which I should like to write, but can promise nothing, and that is the character of Abolitionism. I should like to point out what I think its defects and dangers, and to do something towards helping people to comprehend it. Perhaps the Abolitionists themselves are not aware how little they are understood, both at the North and the South. They are supposed to be partly heated by ideas of rights and liberty, partly fevered by exaggerated ideas of the slave's sufferings, partly stirred up by the passion for notoriety. That they have an *affection* for the colored man as a *man* and a *brother*, and wish to remove what crushes his humanity, is not suspected. The South cannot conceive of this feeling, nor is it very comprehensible at the North. Your *brotherly feeling* towards the slave is a mystery, to a degree which, perhaps, you do not suspect. I should like to scatter this delusion. Could I help to make people understand what a stream of real love is flowing toward the slave, perhaps I should do him more good than by a general vindication of his rights. It would be vastly more difficult, but it would open his way to other hearts. Perhaps the difficulty is to be overcome by the Abolitionists alone, by their persevering, unaffected kindness to the colored race. Are you aware that a master feels as if you were injuring him by presuming to *love* his slaves, and to care for their happiness? It is as if you should take a special liking to his horses or dogs, and think of ministering to their comforts. They are all *his*.”

But the sad event of Mr. Lovejoy's murder, while in the act of forcibly defending his civil rights, gave a new direction to Dr. Channing's thoughts, and made him still more solicitous than before to infuse a higher spirit of calmness, candor, wisdom, into the hearts of those whom he so deeply honored for their humanity and heroism. Immediately after the Faneuil Hall meeting, therefore, he sent a letter to the *Liberator*, extracts from which will fully explain his views.

“*Boston, December 14, 1837.* MY FRIENDS:—A recent event induces me to address to you a few remarks. I trust you will not ascribe them to a love of dictation, and especially that you will not think me capable of uttering a word of censure, in deference to the prejudices and passions of your opposers. My sympathies are with the oppressed and persecuted. I have labored, in a darker day than this, to vindicate your rights; and nothing would tempt me at this moment to speak a disapproving word, if I thought I should

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.

give the slightest countenance to the violence under which you have suffered. I have spoken of the slight service which I have rendered, not as a claim for gratitude, — for I only performed a plain duty, — but as giving me a title to a candid construction of what I am now to offer.

“You well know that I have not been satisfied with all your modes of operation. I have particularly made objections to the organization and union of numerous and wide-spread societies for the subversion of slavery. I have believed, however, that many of the dangerous tendencies of such an association would be obviated by your adoption of what is called ‘the peace principle’; in other words, by your unwillingness to use physical force for self-defence. To this feature of your society I have looked as a pledge that your zeal, even if it should prove excessive, would not work much harm. You can judge, then, of the sorrow with which I heard of the tragedy of Alton, where one of your respected brethren fell with arms in his hands. I felt, indeed, that his course was justified by the laws of his country, and by the established opinions and practice of the civilized world. I felt, too, that the violence under which he fell, regarded as an assault on the press and our dearest rights, deserved the same reprobation from the friends of free institutions as if he had fallen an unresisting victim. But I felt that a cloud had gathered over your society, and that a dangerous precedent had been given in the cause of humanity. So strong was this impression, that, whilst this event found its way into other pulpits, I was unwilling to make it the topic of a religious discourse, but preferred to express my reprobation of it in another place, where it would be viewed only in its bearings on civil and political rights. My hope was, that the members of your society, whilst they would do honor to the fearless spirit of your fallen brother, would still, with one loud voice, proclaim their disapprobation of his last act, and their sorrow that through him a cause of philanthropy had been stained with blood. In this, I am sorry to say that I have been disappointed. I have seen, indeed, no justification of the act. I have seen a few disapproving sentences, but no such clear and general testimony against this error of the lamented Lovejoy as is needed to give assurance against its repetition. . . .

“It seems to me of great importance, that you should steadily disavow this resort to force by Mr. Lovejoy. There are peculiar reasons for it. Your position in our country is peculiar, and makes it important that you should be viewed as incapable of resorting to violent means.

“In the first place, you are a large and growing party, and are



possessed with a fervent zeal, such as has been unknown since the beginning of our Revolutionary conflict. At the same time, you are distrusted, and, still more, hated, by a multitude of your fellow-citizens. Here, then, are the elements of deadly strife. From masses so hostile, so inflamed, there is reason to fear tumults, conflicts, bloodshed. What is it which has prevented these sad results in the past, in the days of your weakness? Your forbearance; your unwillingness to meet force by force. Had you adopted the means of defence which any other party, so persecuted, would have chosen, our streets might again and again have flowed with blood. Society might have been shaken by the conflict. If now, in your strength, you take the sword, and repay blow with blow, what is not to be feared? It is one of the objections to great associations, that they accumulate a power which, in seasons of excitement and exasperation, threatens public commotions, and which may even turn our country into a field of battle. I say, then, that if you choose to organize so vast a force for a cause which awakens fierce passions, you must adopt 'the peace principle' as your inviolable rule. You must trust in the laws, and in the moral sympathies of the community. You must try the power of suffering for truth. The first Christians tried this among communities more ferocious than our own. You have yourselves tried it, and through it have made rapid progress. To desert it might be to plunge the country into fearful contests, and to rob your cause of all its sanctity. . . .

"Hitherto I have appealed confidently to your pacific principles as securities against all wrongs. I have seen with indignation the violence of cowardly and unprincipled men directed against an unresisting band. I trust that your friends will never have cause to grow faint in your defence. I trust that the tragedy of Alton will draw from you new assurances of your trust in God, in the power of truth, and in the moral sympathies of a Christian people. . . .

"Having expressed my disapprobation and fears, I feel that it is right to close this letter with expressing the deep interest I feel in you, not as an association, but as men pledged to the use of all lawful means for the subversion of slavery. There is but one test by which individuals or parties can be judged, and that is, the *principles* from which they act, and which they are pledged to support. No matter how many able men a party may number in its ranks; unless pledged to *great principles*, it must pass away, and its leaders sink into oblivion. There are two great principles to which you are devoted, and for which I have always honored you. The first is, the freedom of the press. This you have not

only vindicated with your lips and pens, but you have asserted it amidst persecutions. The right of a man to publish his convictions on subjects of deepest concern to society and humanity, this you have held fast when most men would have shrunk from it. This practical assertion of a great principle I hold to be worth more than the most eloquent professions of it in public meetings, or than all the vindications of it in the closet. I have thanked you, and thank you again, in the name of liberty, for this good service which you have rendered her. I know of none to whom her debt is greater. There was a time when the freedom of the press needed no defenders in our land, for it was strong in the love of the people. It was recognized as the pervading life, the conservative power, of our institutions. A voice raised against it would have been pronounced moral treason. We clung to it as an immutable principle, as a universal and inalienable right. We received it as an intuitive truth, as no more to be questioned than a law of nature. But 'the times are changed, and we change with them.' Are there no signs, is there nothing to make us fear, that the freedom of speech and the press, regarded as a *right* and a *principle*, is dying out of the hearts of this people? It is not a sufficient answer to say that the vast majority speak and publish their thoughts without danger. The question is, whether this freedom is distinctly and practically recognized as *every man's right*. Unless it stands on this ground, it is little more than a name; it has no permanent life. To refuse it to a minority, however small, is to loosen every man's hold of it, to violate its sacredness, to break up its foundation. A despotism too strong for fear may, through its very strength, allow to the mass great liberty of utterance; but in conceding it as a privilege, and not *as a right*, and by withholding it at pleasure from offensive individuals, the despot betrays himself as truly as if he had put a seal on every man's lips. That state must not call itself free, in which any party, however small, cannot safely speak its mind; in which any party is exposed to violence for the exercise of a universal right; in which the laws, made to protect all, cannot be sustained against brute force. The freedom of speech and the press seems now to be sharing the lot of all great principles. History shows us, that all great principles, however ardently espoused for a time, have a tendency to fade into traditions, to degenerate into a hollow cant, to become words of little import, and to remain for declamation when their vital power is gone. At such a period, every good citizen is called to do what in him lies to restore their life and power. To some, it may be a disheartening thought, that the battle of liberty is never to end, that its first principles must be

established anew, on the very spots where they seemed immovably fixed. But it is the law of our being, that no true good can be made sure without struggle; and it should cheer us to think, that to struggle for the right is the noblest use of our powers, and the only means of happiness and perfection.

“Another ground of my strong interest in your body is, that you are pledged to another principle, far broader than the freedom of the press, and on which this and all other rights repose. You start from the sublimest truth. You oppose slavery, not from political or worldly considerations. You take your stand on the unutterable worth of every human being, and on his inalienable rights as a rational, moral, and immortal child of God. Here is your strength. Unlike the political parties which agitate the country, you have a *principle*, and the grandest which can unite a body of men. That you fully comprehend it, or are always faithful to it, cannot be affirmed; but you have it, and it is cause of joy to see men seizing it even in an imperfect form. All slavery, all oppressive institutions, all social abuses, spring from or involve contempt of human nature. The tyrant does not know *who* it is whom he tramples in the dust. You have caught a glimpse of the truth. The inappreciable worth of every human being, and the derivation of his rights, not from paper constitutions and human laws, but from his spiritual and immortal nature, from his affinity with God, — these are the truths which are to renovate society, by the light of which our present civilization will one day be seen to bear many an impress of barbarism, and by the power of which a real brotherhood will more and more unite the now divided and struggling family of man. . . .

“This is a high standard, but not too high for men who have started from the great principle of your association. They who found their efforts against oppression on *every* man’s near relation to God, on every man’s participation of a moral and immortal nature, cannot, without singular inconsistency, grow fierce against the many in their zeal for a few. From a body founded on such a principle ought to come forth more enlightened friends of the race, more enlarged philanthropists, than have yet been trained. Guard from dishonor the divine truth which you have espoused as your creed and your rule. Show forth its energy in what you do and suffer. Show forth its celestial purity in your freedom from unworthy passions. Prove it to be from God, by serene trust in his providence, by fearless obedience to his will, by imitating his impartial justice and his universal love.

“I now close this long letter. I have spoken the more freely,



because I shall probably be prevented, by various and pressing objects, from communicating with you again. In your great and holy purpose you have my sympathies and best wishes. I implore for you the guidance and blessing of God.

“Very sincerely, your friend.”

In the well-known article, entitled “The Martyr Age of the United States of America,”<sup>1</sup> Miss Martineau thus narrates an occurrence, of which she was probably a witness, and which it may be well to record, as illustrating Dr. Channing’s relations with the Abolitionists. It happened at the time when the board of managers of the Massachusetts Antislavery Society had appointed a committee to confer with a committee of the legislature, in relation to the subject of penal enactments against Abolition societies and Abolition presses, which, as we have seen, some of the Southern States had demanded. “While the committee were, with ostentatious negligence, keeping the Abolitionists waiting, the Senate Chamber presented an interesting spectacle. The contemptuous committee, dawdling about some immaterial business, were lolling over a table. . . . The Abolitionists, to whom this business was a prelude to life or death, were earnestly consulting in groups, — at the farther end of the chamber, Garrison and another, standing head to head, — somewhat nearer, Dr. Follen, looking German all over, and a deeper earnestness than usual overspreading his serene and meditative countenance; and in consultation with him Mr. Loring, looking only too frail in form, but with a face radiant with inward light. There were May, and Goodell, and Sewall, and several more, and many an anxious wife, or sister, or friend, looking down from the gallery. During the suspense, the door opened, and Dr. Channing entered, — one of the last people that could, on that wintry afternoon, have been expected. He stood for a few moments muffled in cloak and shawl-handkerchief, then walked the whole length of the room, and was immediately seen shaking hands with Mr. Garrison. He afterwards explained, that he was not, at the moment, certain that it was Mr. Garrison, but that he was not the less happy to have shaken hands with him. A murmur ran through the gallery, and a smile went round the chamber. Mrs. Chapman whispered to her next neighbor, — ‘Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ Dr. Channing had censured the Abolitionists in his pamphlet on Slavery. Mr. Garrison, in the *Liberator*, had rejected the censure, and here they were, shaking hands in the Senate Chamber. It was presently found that a pres-

<sup>1</sup> London and Westminster Review, December, 1838.

sure of numbers compelled an adjournment to the larger House of Representatives. There Dr. Channing sat, behind the speakers, handing them notes, and most obviously affording them his countenance, so as to be thenceforth considered by the world an accession to their principles, though not to their organized body."

Some painful facts in relation to the mode in which the Antislavery movement was for many years regarded by leading persons in the Federal Street Society must here be stated, as yet further proving Dr. Channing's readiness to co-operate with the Abolitionists, so far as his judgment and conscience would permit. In "Right and Wrong in Boston, 1835," Mrs. Chapman, speaking of the Boston Female Antislavery Society, says: "Having notified it" — an address by George Thompson, explanatory of the objects of Antislavery associations — "in the Rev. Dr. Channing's church, where a notice of our meetings has never been refused a reading." This was true of the earliest years of the Antislavery movement, and would have been true always, had Dr. Channing's wishes been followed. It was his desire, not only that notices of the Antislavery societies should be freely read in the Federal Street pulpit, but that the meeting-house itself should be opened for their use. In both respects he was overruled by the decision of the Federal Street congregation. The standing committee placed a strict embargo upon all notices of a doubtful character, so that very few of Antislavery meetings ever reached the officiating minister. And in April, 1837, Dr. Channing received a negative answer to the following note: —

*"To the Standing Committee of Federal Street Church.*

"GENTLEMEN: — The enclosed letter" — an application by Francis Jackson, Esq., for the use of the church for the Anniversary Meeting of the New England Antislavery Society — "was sent to me this morning. I wrote in reply, that it would be very agreeable to me that our church should be used for the purpose expressed in the letter; but that it was the custom with us for the committee of the society to receive and decide on such applications, and that I would accordingly lay the subject before them, which I now do.

"Very truly, your friend."

It was entirely against his will that, under these circumstances, the Federal Street meeting-house was obtained from the committee for the purpose of a lecture, by the disingenuous action of an agent of the Colonization Society. But a far more bitter disappointment followed. Nothing in all his intercourse with his people, nothing in

his whole Antislavery experience, caused him so much pain as a refusal of the use of the church to the Massachusetts Antislavery Society, on the sad occasion when all true-hearted persons were called to mourn the awful death of Charles Follen, and when the Rev. S. J. May had prepared a discourse in commemoration of the rare virtues of that heroic and honored man. It was not only the insult to the memory of a beloved friend that grieved him, — though this could not but shock his quick and delicate feelings; still less was it the disregard, under such touching circumstances, of his well-known wishes, that wounded him most deeply; but this manifestation of a want of high sentiment in the congregation to which, for so many years, he had officiated as pastor, made him question the usefulness of his whole ministry. To what end had he poured out his soul, if such conduct was a practical embodiment of the principles and precepts which he had so earnestly inculcated? This event brought home to his heart the conviction, that the need was very urgent of a thorough application of the Christian law of love to all existing social relations.

The following letters will complete the view of Dr. Channing's connection with the Antislavery movement.

“*Newport, August 2, 1838.*<sup>1</sup> Yesterday we rode to Fall River, to attend a meeting in acknowledgment of the great goodness of God in giving freedom to eight hundred thousand fellow-creatures in the West Indies. What a glorious triumph of Christianity! — for this work has been accomplished by the spirit of justice and benevolence which Christianity has spread abroad. And can this spirit stop? Has it done its work? Has it more than begun its work? I feel a more cheering hope than ever for my race. Never had I so little alarm. In truth, all alarm seems to have left me. I confide in truth, and God, and human nature more than ever, and want nothing but strength to enter with new life on my labors.”

“*Boston, February 26, 1840.* Slavery never seemed to me a more important subject. I am sorry that —— thinks so highly of political action on the subject. My belief is, that the cause would have gone on steadily, surely, had not political action been resorted to, — had the friends of the cause labored to attract to it the thinking, virtuous, patriotic, by unremitting appeals to the reason and conscience.”

“*October 6, 1840.*<sup>2</sup> I have no hostility to this society,<sup>3</sup> if it will confine itself to its legitimate objects. The chief of these I under-

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

<sup>3</sup> The Colonization Society.

<sup>2</sup> To Mr. Hazard, Vacluse, R. I.



stand to be the civilizing and Christianizing of Africa, and the suppression of the slave trade. How far a colony made up of such materials as you send may answer these ends, some will question. But if any have faith in it, I say, let them try it, and may God bless their benevolent efforts. My objection to the society is, that it has exerted an influence, and a very disastrous one, beyond its proper limits. I fear that it has done more to depress and corrupt the moral sentiments of the community on the subject of Emancipation, than all other things.

“But the past is past. I desire a better future. You, as a friend of freedom and humanity, cannot knowingly, I am sure, give aid to doctrines and efforts which go to quiet the conscience of the slaveholder and to crush the hope of the slave. Why is it necessary that Colonization and Emancipation should come into collision? Why may not good men favor both? Why cannot the children of Africa on both sides of the ocean be raised at the same moment to the rights and dignity of man? Good men will choose, among various objects of humanity, to which they will devote themselves. But why quarrel with and obstruct others? Whoever places himself in the way of Emancipation I must regard as acting the part of the enemy of his race, and it is poor comfort to me that he does this in order to produce another good. In these views I doubt not that I have your sympathy, and what I desire is, that you would spare no effort to bring the operations of the Colonization Society into harmony with them. I should rejoice to see this institution accomplishing its ends in Africa; but I cannot expect to see it doing good abroad, if it shall, in any way, countenance oppression at home. Let its munificent patrons say, with decision, that it must not, directly or indirectly, obstruct the cause of emancipation at home, and I believe the difficulty will end. Is the time never to come when good men will pursue their various paths in peace?”

“*April 1, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> I thank you for ‘The Hour and the Man.’ You have given a magnificent picture of Toussaint; and, in truth, I know not where the heroic character is more grandly conceived. May you live to render many such services to humanity!”

“*Newport, June 21, 1841.* I have had a very pleasant visit southward, — have seen more of society and the country, and experienced much kindness. The Abolitionists have given me a cordial welcome, and it delights me to see how a great common object

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

establishes in an hour a confidence and friendship which years are sometimes necessary to produce. My 'Emancipation' has been spread widely, and I believe done much good. It has been put into the hands of men of influence. It is just stereotyped, and I know not how many thousands are to be sent forth. A Quaker from England brought me a letter from the venerable Clarkson, with a lock of his hair, in testimony of his pleasure in the work. I cannot tell you the hospitalities which my Abolition labors win for me, nor was I aware of the extent of their influence. I ought certainly to be grateful for them. The opposition they have excited has done me great good, has been a very precious part of the experience of my life, and now the blessings of success are added to the higher blessing of suffering for the truth. I do not wear as yet a crown of martyrdom. I hope I have not declined it by dishonorable compliance."

"August 10, 1842. Finding the people around me disposed to forget the slave, I prepared an address for the First of August, which has gone to the press. I feel that such efforts bring me before the public as a *pamphleteer*, not a very exalted name in literature. But this is the readiest way to the public mind, and I could not decline the task without self-reproach."

"September, 1842.<sup>1</sup> My First of August address was written under the inspiration of the mountains, which you know are the 'holy land' of liberty. I did not think of making any serious effort, but insensibly it grew under my hands, till it spread over pages enough to require an hour and a half for the delivery. I had only strength to speak an hour and ten or fifteen minutes. I do not know that I ever spoke with more effect. I felt that I had found my way to the hearts of my hearers. What the intrinsic, permanent merits of the address are, I cannot say. Its popularity is no proof of any particular merit. It is in the press."

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## CHAPTER V. — POLITICS.

FROM the days when, as a boy, he stood amid the assembled citizens of Rhode Island, and heard his father's persuasive voice urging the adoption of the Federal Constitution, onward through every year of widening experience and growing power, Dr. Chan-

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. E. L. Follen.

ning's interest had deepened in the changes by which human governments are becoming moulded after patterns of divine order. Piety and charity, breathed in from Christianity, only enlarged, while they purified, his love of civil freedom. Politics were to him the body of religion. And his ever-expanding hope and purpose was to aid in diffusing that spirit of love, whereby law and liberty will become one, and societies on earth be made to image in justice and in joy the societies of heaven.

In a letter suggested by reading the "Great Song" of Charles Follen,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Channing has very beautifully sketched the process, which he had seen in his friend, and was conscious of in himself, whereby youth's glowing zeal is transformed into the steel-like firmness of manhood, in the truly disinterested political reformer. The extract will best introduce his views of politics in later years.

"They who have felt in their youth the enthusiasm of freedom, whose spirits have been stirred within them by the sight of oppression, will easily interpret the language of this song, written at the age of seventeen. They will see in its tone of vehement indignation nothing cruel or unfeeling, but the natural utterance of intense, all-sacrificing devotion to the rights, dignity, and happiness of mankind. The fiery soul of youth does not count its words, nor does it weigh cautiously the consequences of acts to which it is prompted by generous impulse. In its inexperience and earnestness, it is impatient of slow means of redress, and hopes to level the fabric of despotism, the work of ages, with a blow. Courageous, heroic, sympathizing with the martyr of liberty in all ages, it burns to seize the avenging sword, and almost envies those who have redeemed oppressed nations by their blood. Such is the picture of the noblest and most generous natures in youth, and we should grievously misconstrue them, were we to see in their defying tones the signs of ferocity. A manhood of the sweetest, serenest virtue often follows a youth of irrepressible enthusiasm. The most interesting characters, indeed, are those in which the uncalculating, disinterested ardor of early life is tempered with the wisdom of years."

Few men have lived more profoundly moved by patriotism — if that much abused word may be redeemed to signify a devotedness to the essential principles and real prosperity of a people — than Dr. Channing. With his whole soul he longed to realize that ideal of a "Christian Commonwealth," which heralded our forefathers to this virgin land. No storms, no frosts, could dim the

<sup>1</sup> Life of Charles Follen, p. 593.



beacon-fire of this great hope. Yet how expansive was this patriotism may be seen from the following extracts.

1831. "A nation, blessed as we are with free institutions, should feel that it holds these not for itself only, but for mankind, and that all oppressive establishments must fall before their influence, if it will but give proof of their tendency and power to exalt a people in spirit, in virtue, and in condition. In truth, this close connection of different communities should lead us as individuals, as well as in our associated character, to interest ourselves in the cause of humanity through the whole earth. The present is an age of great movements, of great perils, and still of glorious prospects, and one in which there is a power of sympathy, as well as means of co-operation and extensive agency, never known before. In such an age, we should not shut up ourselves in ourselves, or look on the struggles of nations with a vain curiosity, but should watch the changes of the world with profound concern, and respond to great principles, and cheer philanthropic efforts, wherever manifested. We should feel, I think, that the time is approaching in which Christian philanthropy is to act a new part on the theatre of human affairs, is to unite men of different countries in the same great work of rolling away abuses, of staying wide-spread evils, vindicating private rights, establishing public peace, and exalting the condition of the ignorant. We should do what we can to hasten on this era. Our children should be educated on more generous principles, and taught to make new sacrifices to the cause of their fellow-creatures. Every age teaches its own lesson. The lesson of this age is that of sympathy with the suffering, and of devotion to the progress of the whole human race."

His conviction of the grand privileges and duties of the United States made Dr. Channing indignant at the scepticism which he found but too prevalent in regard to the success of free institutions. This feeling manifests itself in a sermon preached to his people soon after the destruction of the convent on Mount Benedict.

*October, 1834.* "With the mob itself I have nothing to do. On the feelings of the community which excited it, or which have grown out of it, and which seem to me reprehensible, I shall offer a few remarks.

"Let me begin with observing, that the tone of alarm and despair produced by this outrage, and in which, as a community, we are very prone to indulge in all critical seasons, seems to me neither just nor wise. Multitudes among us, on that occasion, spoke, as they have too often spoken, as if society were shaken to

its foundations, all its joints loosened, all its fixtures about to be swept away. Such alarms create the danger which they imagine. The foundation of a free community is the moral confidence of its members in one another. Impair this, and society is indeed convulsed. Inspire a people with mutual distrust, and you fit them for chains. What is the strength of a despotism? It is the want of moral confidence in a people. Why does one will subjugate millions? Because those millions have no mutual respect or trust as a basis of joint action. The individual on whose heart the thought of freedom has dawned dares not breathe it into his neighbor's ear, lest that neighbor should prove a spy. He has around him cowards or sycophants, men sold to selfishness and meanness, and sinks into despair. Breathe through this mass one generous sentiment which should bind them together, and despotism would fall as by an earthquake.

"The old enthusiasm of liberty seems to be dying among us. The spirit of aristocracy, which always grows with the growth of population and wealth, and, still more, the crimes and errors which have dishonored the cause of constitutional freedom in both continents, have chilled the old republican ardor. The faith of many in the capacity of men for self-government is shaken. Little interest is felt in the struggles of other nations for emancipation from old abuses, and for securing better institutions. This is not to be wondered at, but it is much to be deplored. Despair of improvement is the symptom of spiritual death. Freedom is departing when faith in it is lost. The dangers of innovation, and the liableness of liberty to abuse, do, indeed, teach and enjoin great caution and sobriety in the adoption of plans for the advancement of society; but they ought not to repress or weaken our sense of justice, our sympathy with the oppressed, our earnest desire to break every chain, and our trust in patient, upright efforts in the cause of human nature. . . .

"Let us, then, trust in one another to the very limit of truth. Men grow more trustworthy by mutual confidence. We are unwise and unjust to ourselves in speaking, as we are apt to do, of our free government as a rope of sand, as a baseless, rotten fabric, which any storm may sweep away. We make it insecure by this distrust of its stability. Undoubtedly it has its dangers, for liberty of every kind is perilous; but if ever a nation had the means of giving permanence to freedom, it is the United States, and ours will be the crime if it perish in our hands.

"A mob is, indeed, to be regarded with horror and detestation, just as we regard a murderer. But when a man is murdered, we

do not think that butchery is to become the order of the day ; nor when a mob breaks out ought we to feel as if all the authority of law, all social order, were on the brink of ruin. Mobs springing from the blind prejudices or passions of individuals may do great harm, and ought to be provided against more efficiently ; but these will never dissolve our government, or essentially impair public security. Mobs may, indeed, become instruments of ruin, but not such as we have lately witnessed. I refer to mobs connected with great parties, protected by them, and used by them as instruments. Here is a peril which cannot be set before us in too strong a light. Even here, however, the danger will not be in the mob, but in the spirit of party, which will vindicate, organize, and wield it. The great danger of our country does not lie in occasional outbreaks of the ignorant and depraved part of the community, but in the spirit of party, inflaming and poisoning all breasts with hatred, propagating falsehood till no man can know the truth, legalizing fraud, intrigue, and corruption, subverting moral confidence, seeking strength in tumults, and converting elections into mobs. If this state of madness should be produced in the community, then indeed, and then only, the shout of mobs will be the knell of freedom."

From these general remarks, the preacher passes on to a particular consideration of the mob at Charlestown. It will be seen how utterly opposed he was in principle and feeling to the blind prejudices which prompted that outrage ; and an inference may be drawn as to the tone in which he would have spoken of "Native Americanism," had he been living, although he was fully aware of the evils incident to promiscuous suffrage.

"The feelings excited by that event were in general just and honorable to us as a community. But I understand one feeling has been called out which deserves severe reprobation, and which, I fear, has not been rebuked as it deserves. It is said, that not a few among us are, in a measure, reconciled to the outrage, because of its bearing on an unpopular sect, — because it broke down one of the fortresses of Popery ; though this is the very circumstance which ought to awaken against it peculiar indignation. It is said that language like the following is not very uncommon : 'The mob was a bad thing, but it did some good. It destroyed the convent, that hateful monument of Romanism.' This language is as unworthy as it is false, and deserves as severe rebuke as the mob itself. No *good* has been done, and the evil was the very one which ought most to humble us as a people. Our highest distinction as



a community is the spirit of religious freedom. This city has been the metropolis of religious liberty to the whole earth, and that the persecution of the Dark Ages should be revived here is cause of unutterable shame. It is no good that a convent has been burnt. Better that twenty convents should rise than that one should be suppressed by brute force.

“It is hoped by many that Catholicism has thus received a check. I trust it has not. Better that it should triumph than be *thus* checked. Experience has shown that persecution strengthens religious sects. May this experience never fail. May persecutors learn, by invariable disappointment, that they are working ruin to themselves and their cause by their bloody instruments, — that their weapons are sure to recoil on themselves. In what lies the worst evil of Popery? Not in its doctrines, — in transubstantiation, purgatory, or the invocation of saints. Many who have held these errors have been the excellent of the earth, unsurpassed in genius, philanthropy, and piety. It is the insolent, intolerant pretension to infallibility, — to the distinction of being the only true and apostolic church, — to the authority of denouncing heresy, — which has made Popery the scourge and curse of Christendom. It is the war which this church has waged against the rights of conscience, against the free worship of God, which has branded her with indelible infamy. And do we who call ourselves Protestants, who have inscribed religious freedom on our banner, — do we begin to borrow the sword and fire of persecuting Rome? Do we stoop to take up the unholy weapons which even Rome is throwing down?

“Is there a man with the least pretension to character among us, who dares even to insinuate his complacency at the check which Catholicism has received by the late outrage? Rebuke and indignation should put him to shame. Nothing is so terrible as persecution. Human nature has never shown itself more fiendish than when it has cloaked its bad passions under the garb of religion, and let them loose against the enemies of God. Religion was given to bind together, refine, soften human hearts. Its great ministry is that of love. But when narrowed into bigotry, when it worships God as the God of a sect, and arms itself in his name with flames or tortures for the suppression of opposite creeds, it is more hardening to the heart, more merciless and unsparing, and presents more insuperable obstacles to the progress of truth and the free development of human nature, than any principle which can be named. We did hope that this crime of dark ages was past; that, among all our vices, persecution by force was at an end; and I know that it is the abhorrence of those to whom I speak, and of the com-

munity. But the fact, that any have been found among us, consenting, however indirectly, to the putting down of a sect by force, shows us that the spirit of persecution is not dead. If, then, you meet persons who, condemning the mob, yet hope advantage from the direction of its fury against a superstitious church, tell them that their language is disloyalty to Protestantism, and pregnant with evil to society and religion; that, could Catholicism be utterly destroyed by such an outrage, the evil would swallow up the imagined good; that the sanction thus given to persecution would bring a flood of crimes and woes into the church, far worse than the superstition which would be overwhelmed. Tell them, that in their hearts they are the true disciples of the school of the Inquisition, and that perhaps nothing but the power of opinion or the spirit of the age prevents them from re-enacting the part of St. Dominick."

The political lesson taught by mobs he thus faithfully interprets:—

"I grieve when I hear men referring to the next legislature, as if some stronger laws were all that we need for our security. Let us have these laws; but unless accompanied by wise, patient, generous efforts for the reformation and advancement of the ignorant and exposed classes of the community, they will avail little. Our mobs, though they have spoken in confused and discordant yells, have uttered one truth plainly; and this truth is, that there exists among us—what ought to exist in no Christian country—a mass of gross ignorance and vice. They teach one plain lesson to the religious, virtuous, philanthropic, educated, refined, and opulent; and that is, that these have a great work to do, the work of enlightening and lifting up a large portion of their fellow-creatures and their neighbors; that they have no right to spend their lives in accumulating wealth or in selfish indulgences, but that they are to labor, to expend time, thought, wealth, as their circumstances may permit, for the intellectual, moral, spiritual life of a multitude around them, buried in darkness, prejudice, sensuality, excess, and crime. This is the great lesson to be learned from mobs. If we heed not this, if we look for safety to penal laws, rather than to the performance of personal duty, the disinterested labors of Christian love, and the faithful use of the best means of purifying and elevating society, we shall have none to blame but ourselves, if society become the prey of violence and insurrection."

These extracts prove how deeply Dr. Channing was convinced that the security and strength of free governments are to be found in the general culture and the cordial intercourse of all classes of citizens. His want of confidence in force and penalties, as means

of order in republics, appears very clearly in a letter occasioned by the struggle to secure universal suffrage in his native State.

“*Lenox, Mass., July 3, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR, — I received, a short time since, your discourse on the Rhode Island troubles, and was truly grateful for it. Your views are fitted to do much good, though on one point I, who reside at a distance, have a somewhat different state of feeling. I have never doubted that the great mass of the ‘Suffrage party’ started with a truly honest purpose, and with a thorough conviction of right. Indeed, I suppose all thought themselves in the right. The doctrine, that ‘the majority ought to govern,’ passes with the multitude as an intuition, and they have never thought how far it is to be modified in practice, and how far the application of it ought to be controlled by other principles. The ‘Suffrage party’ were inflamed and confirmed by fierce spirits through the country, and still more, they had just cause of complaint against the Charter. The disfranchisement of so great a number, who, according to our republican creed, had a right to vote, and the enormous and unjust inequalities of representation in the northern and southern parts of the State, were serious grievances, — giving no ground for the use of force against the existing government, indeed, but very naturally leading the half-educated multitude to believe in their right to get rid of this government in any way whatever. The existence of these wrongs in the established system has always made me look with great tenderness on the rash steps of the revolutionists. I do believe that the idea of right has been present to their minds, and has done much to hide from them their own violence and wrong-doing. And I insist on this, because I am most desirous that a system of great lenity should be adopted towards these misguided men. I know that the State does not need severity for its own safety, and I hope it will not fall into cruelty from revenge. You have a great influence. I beg you to exert it in the cause of mercy and humanity. . . .

“With great regard, your friend.”

But though thus earnestly advocating the just claims of the Suffrage party, Dr. Channing was not in favor of the unrestricted right of voting. The views which he was inclined to adopt upon this fundamental question are thus expressed:—

“I have endeavored, on all occasions, to disprove the notion, that the laboring classes are unfit depositaries of political power. I owe it, however, to truth to say, that I believe that the elective

<sup>1</sup> To Francis Wayland, D. D.



franchise is extended too far in this country. No man, I think, should be intrusted with this high privilege, who has not been instructed in the principles of our government and in the duties of a good citizen, and who cannot afford evidence of respectability in regard to morals. One of the principal objects of our public schools should be, to train the young of all conditions for the duties of good citizens, to furnish them with the necessary knowledge of principles for the judicious use of political power. The admission of the young to the privilege of voting should be the most solemn public act, the grand national festival. It should be preceded by an examination of the candidates. It should be accompanied by the most imposing forms, fitted to impress the young and the whole community with the great responsibility and honorableness of this trust.

“None of us seem adequately to understand, that to confer the elective franchise is to admit a man to the *participation of* SOVEREIGNTY, of the supreme power of the state. The levity with which this dignity is conferred, the thoughtlessness with which it has been extended, constitutes one of our great political dangers. Were the proper qualifications for it required, they would not exclude one class rather than another. The aim should be to exclude the unworthy of all classes. A community is bound to provide for itself the best possible government, and this implies the obligation to withhold political power from those who are palpably disqualified by gross ignorance or by profligacy for comprehending or consulting the general welfare,—who cannot exercise the sovereignty, without injuring the commonwealth.

“I am fully aware of the obstacles which the violence of party spirit would throw in the way of the system now proposed, and I cannot but fear that the inconsiderateness with which the highest political power has been squandered in this country has gone too far for remedy. Still, it is useful to hold up to a people what it owes to itself. At least, these remarks will prevent my fellow-citizens from considering me as an advocate of universal suffrage, in the present state of society. I think, however, that a system of education should be established in a republic for the very purpose of making suffrage universal,—that is, for the purpose of qualifying every man to be a voter. But in the case of those who will not avail themselves of the natural means of improvement, political power should be withheld.”

In this extract, some remaining influence may be traced of the early Federal training of the writer. Through life, however, Dr. Channing was steadily becoming more confident in regard to the

working of the most popular forms of government. The following letters indicate this tendency.

“October 25, 1840.<sup>1</sup> I am truly glad that Professor Smyth received any pleasure from my notice of his work. I have now read both volumes, and the impressions made by the first are all confirmed. . . . But what I particularly regret is the severe sentence he passes on republican or democratic institutions. He maintains that these do not admit a proper executive power. This opinion he grounds chiefly on the weakness of the Continental Congress during our Revolution, which, indeed, put our liberties in peril. That Congress was not properly a government; it was rather a committee of the different States, having no power to tax the people, but simply to recommend taxes to the State legislatures. These legislatures were the only governments; and though got up in a moment of insurrection, they were able to keep order in a country overrun with an enemy. This is no mean testimony to their efficacy.

“Our present federal government, framed deliberately after the Revolution, is a fair specimen of republican institutions. And what is the result, — that the executive proves too weak? At this moment, the outcry of the old Federalists, of the very men most anxious for a strong government, is, that the balance of the system is endangered by the growth of the executive power. It was a common remark, that President Jackson had more power than your King William. Besides the great patronage which the astonishing growth of the country has thrown into the President’s hands, it is found that, in the present stage of society, a free country must be broken into, and governed by parties, and that among us the stronger party is represented by the President, who is, indeed, its head, and is sustained in all his measures *by its whole power*. Undoubtedly, a dominant party may help to secure itself in some exigency by relaxing the authority of the laws; but the expedient is a dangerous one, and cannot go far in an industrious, commercial, and tolerably enlightened community, where the people at large have a plain interest in social order and in the rights of property.

“In this country, besides the general government, we have twenty-six State governments, purely republican, and in their constitutional sphere independent of each other and of Congress; and one third of these States have shot up suddenly in the wilderness, a circumstance most unfavorable to rigid execution of law. Yet the country, as a whole, is not surpassed in point of order. Our

<sup>1</sup> To William Rathbone, Esq.

institutions, in their infancy, have stood the storm of the French Revolution, the tendencies to lawlessness in new settlements, and terrible commercial convulsions, springing from a reckless spirit of speculation. Have they severer trials to fear? In your country a very strong government is rendered necessary by the unnatural state of society, artificial ranks, exclusive privileges, fearful inequalities of condition, the ignorance and degradation and misery of the working classes, an intolerable debt, vast and distant colonies, and a most cumbrous state machinery required to manage such an unwieldy and disproportioned whole. A government starting on just and simple principles, and proposing, as its first object, to establish and enforce an equal and wise jurisprudence, so that *the rights of all* may be equally secure, will require but little comparative force.

“I have written thus largely, because I want Professor Smyth to think better of republics. I know their danger, but they seem to me the fittest institutions for a man to live under. Can you give him my views?”

“June 20, 1841.<sup>1</sup> I wish your venerable friend, Mr. Smyth, had, for his own sake, or the comfort of his last years, retained his faith in freedom unimpaired. Retain it in a measure he must. He could not live without it, but he fears, I think, more than he need fear. *My* judgment in regard to this country I should not think of stating to him again; but it is worthy of his consideration, that our conservatives, our alarmists, the men who sympathize with him most, all agree in the belief, that the balance of the Constitution has been endangered by the increase of the executive power. I feel more and more the difficulty of judging of new institutions, especially in a foreign country. The great danger to our institutions, which alarms our conservatives most, has not, perhaps, entered Mr. Smyth's mind. It is the danger of a party organization so subtle and strong as to make the government the monopoly of a few leaders, and to insure the transmission of the executive power from hand to hand, almost as regularly as in a monarchy. A sagacious and old conservative told me, a few months ago, that the Democratic party under Jackson and Van Buren had become so trained, so closely bound together, especially by the executive patronage, that nothing but the late tremendous suffering of the country could have stirred it up to throw off the yoke. His statement I think exaggerated, but that this danger is real cannot be doubted. So that we have to watch against despotism as well as, or more than, anarchy.

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Wm. Rathbone.



“Mr. Rathbone, too, fell into an error. He saw, in the escape from punishment of the men who burnt the Catholic convent and the Pennsylvania Hall, signs of the weakness of our government. These men\* escaped wholly in consequence of our adhering to the English institution of *trial by jury*. The men would have been punished, could they have been convicted. But popular prejudice and passion rendered it impossible to get sufficient evidence, or an impartial jury. In the case of Pennsylvania Hall, the trial for damages is still going on. My friends hope for a favorable verdict. In this case we see that no institutions, however good, can be enjoyed without experience of evil. We must take things as they are. A free government undoubtedly has its evils. A people, on the whole, are poor rulers, but far better than kings and aristocracies. All governments are and must be bad, till men grow wiser and better.

“The advantage of popular institutions is, that they are founded in natural right, that they educate and elevate a people more than any other, and thus, in the long run, that the people will learn their true interest, whilst privileged orders must, from the nature of the case, postpone this interest to their own.”

The more Dr. Channing's faith in man deepened, the less did he look to government in any form, or controlled by any party, as a trustworthy means of human elevation. He was jealous of power, whether wielded by the few or the many. His estimate of existing parties, and of their tendencies, will best appear by giving a few extracts from his correspondence.

“*Philadelphia, May 27, 1835.* Were you here, you would be in your element, for the political fever rages not a little, and boys and men talk as ardently about President and Bank as you could desire. I keep myself in peace. I hear sad predictions; but passion is a poor prophet, and I trust more to my own calm anticipations. No convulsions are near, but the age is a troubled one, and every young man should be brought up to make great sacrifices for his country, and for the rights and happiness of mankind. I confess I have a desire to make a hero of you; not a vulgar one, not a bloody one, but ready to face any and every thing in obedience to your conscience and highest principles.”

1837.<sup>1</sup> “I rejoice to find any portion of your Democratic brethren taking the ground of peace. I have little confidence in this party, because it is a *party*, and of consequence prepared to make

<sup>1</sup> To J. L. O'Sullivan, Esq.

any and every sacrifice to its own success. How I should rejoice to find the real friends of the people coming together, and striving, through good and evil report, for each and every man's rights, liberties, education, and elevation, for the spirit of brotherhood, for universal peace, and for the freest intercourse of nations! That the Democratic party would yield its full proportion of such friends of the people, I doubt not. But I hope nothing from it as a party."

"*February 7, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> It is a singular problem, how a people, so practical and intelligent in the main as we are, should be represented by such a set of men. What increases the mystery is, that most of these men, taken singly and in private life, are respectable. The solution is, that political power is more blinding, corrupting, and maddening than any other, and the lesson is, to restrict government to the very narrowest powers which social order requires. Europe, looking at our House of Representatives, must think us a nation of half-fools or half-madmen; and yet we are far in advance of Europe. It is only on the political stage that we play such antics. The people seem to be more alive to the disgrace brought on the country by Congress. But it will be long before the wild spirits of the West and South will be tamed."

"*March 1, 1842.*<sup>2</sup> The political state of the country is exceedingly perplexed. The Whig party has little unity, and is threatened with dissolution by President Tyler's veto on their National Bank bill, a measure maintained chiefly on party grounds. Would the Democrats break up too, and could we start afresh, the government would probably be less of an evil than it is. I am a thorough republican, as you know, but I have no great faith in the people, any more than in kings, as legislators, and I ask of both to govern as little as possible. In the present state of the world, King Log seems the best king. I trust we are growing up to a comprehension of the good of nations and individuals, which will make government a safer machine."

From the following passages it will be seen how clearly Dr. Channing recognized that the aristocratic and democratic elements, innate and uneradicable as they are, are contending under new banners and with new weapons, and that the political struggle of this generation is between money and man, the owners of past labor and the toiling producers. It was very obvious to him that a new era has opened, — the reign of commerce and combined capi-

<sup>1</sup> To Harmanus Bleecker, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> To George Combe, Esq.

tal, — and that the passion for property is the tyrant chiefly now to be dreaded as the foe to freedom. He thus exposes the mercenary spirit which has usurped control over politicians, parties, and humane principles : —

“*April 22, 1837.*<sup>1</sup> I am more and more struck with the mournful effects of the infinite, intense thirst for gain and accumulation here. It takes so much the form of insanity, that one may, on that account, charge on it the less immorality. The spirit of commercial gambling, or what is called by courtesy speculation, has infected almost all ranks, and all are now tasting its bitter fruits. But I care little for these fruits comparatively. The suffering we deserve. The unprincipledness which has led to it is shocking. My comfort is, that the present condition of society must wear out. It is, perhaps, a necessary stage, but a better civilization will succeed it. This people will find out, at length, that money is not the supreme end of the social compact; that republican institutions in particular have liberty and improvement, and the development of human nature, for their objects, not a miserable, degrading drudgery for accumulation. I sometimes desire ardently to be transported to some simple and comparatively poor condition of society, where I might meet greater respect for human nature, and a sincere prevalent devotion to the spiritual purposes of human life.”

“*August 23, 1837.*<sup>2</sup> The *morals of commerce* is truly a great subject, especially in our two countries. So vast and various are our commercial relations, that they do much to determine individual character, and a man violating principle in these is inflicting the deadliest wound on his virtue. Much might be done by a strong, clear exposition of the rights and duties, the true principles, and the perils of trade. The cure, however, requires deeper applications. The unmastered, immeasurable passion for gain lies at the root of the evil, and this is to be met by a higher, wiser application of Christian truth. The moral sense on this subject is to be *created*. I have often been struck with the entire composure with which a congregation will hear their worldliness rebuked, when they would wince if any acknowledged vice were charged on them. They really see no guilt in an entire absorption in outward interests. We want a new administration of Christianity and moral truth. It is cheering to me to find your mind so alive to the great principles which ought to be enthroned in every heart.”

<sup>1</sup> To George Ticknor, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> To William Rathbone, Esq.



“*April, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> Our country is suffering severely from commercial depression. An inflated currency, which gave birth and means to excessive and unprincipled speculation, is producing its natural effects. In nearly half the country, the banks have suspended specie payments, and this derangement of the exchanges has sadly crippled the other parts of the country. Could we learn wisdom by what we suffer, the temporary evil would be as nothing. But the present commercial system seems essentially corrupt. I see, however, that the present has grown out of the past, that it is a necessary stage of society, that its evils are connected with, if not results of, newly developed principles and energies, which the experience of centuries may be needed to modify and harmonize. This vast system of Providence stretches beyond our sight on every side. We must not be disheartened by its mysteries, but in a spirit of faith go on to do the best we can for ourselves and our race.”

Seeing thus that the progress of civil liberty in the state, and of moral elevation in the individual, is hindered by the absorbing pursuit of gain, and that the insinuating power of commercial speculators, bankers, brokers, and large corporations is gaining mastery over all other elements in the body politic, Dr. Channing found cause for rejoicing in the periods of stagnation and bankruptcy, which, under the present system of competitive anarchy, inevitably alternate with those of fevered enterprise. In preaching and in conversation he took advantage of these pauses to administer the frankest words of counsel to all within the sphere of his influence; and his letters will exhibit the uncompromising fidelity with which he interpreted the teachings of Providence.

“*December 31, 1841.*<sup>2</sup> I wish I could send you any better accounts of our financial concerns. There are fears that some of the States will refuse to pay the interest of their debts, and that we are to be disgraced still more in the eyes of the world. It is some comfort to know that no foreigner has a right to complain of New England. It ought, too, to be added, that our people have got into their difficulties very much through ignorance. Our State legislatures, which are competent to ordinary matters, are unfit to devise and carry on public works, and know little of finance and of the arts of stock-jobbers. The consequence is, that, through the unskilfulness or frauds of their agents, and the tricks of the stock market, some, perhaps most, of the indebted States have

<sup>1</sup> To M. J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi.

<sup>2</sup> To Thomas Thornely, Esq.

been cheated out of no small part of the loans for which their bonds were given. The people in their simplicity have all along been deceived by the fair promises of leaders and interested men, and now that they wake up to the truth, they not unnaturally, though very unwarrantably, seek pretexts for breach of faith in the wrongs and artifices which have been practised on themselves.

“I deplore greatly this dishonesty in States, and the sufferings of individuals which must follow; but I have little doubt that in the end we shall have a sounder state of things. The prodigality and recklessness of our State legislatures, which have inflicted incomparably greater evil on this country than on foreign creditors, are brought to an end, and the people have learned a salutary jealousy of those bodies which will not soon die. Meanwhile, the whole community must bear the reproach which belongs to a small part. This is a necessary consequence of our political union, nor do I desire to avert it. It is by such retributions that the importance of national character is more felt. I have no despondence. We have great evils here, as everywhere, to encounter, but there is an amount of intelligence and energy which must at length triumph.”

“*Boston, January 21, 1842.* I am sure that some good is to come from our present difficulties. The State legislatures will be kept to their proper spheres. Our facilities of credit will be diminished; and I hope, that, what with the loss of reputation, and what with the suspension of public works, immigration will also be diminished. The ‘credit system,’ as it is called, has wrought immense evil, and it has received a blow not easily to be recovered from. . . . The sum is, let us, as individuals and as a people, be scrupulously honest. The papers speak of Judge Hopkinson’s dangerous sickness. He ought to be honored for the lessons of pecuniary integrity he gave to his fellow-citizens. You young men cannot feel too strongly the importance of ‘common honesty.’

“I am most anxious that the insolvent States should pay their debts, and not bring infamy on us all. The late resolve in the Pennsylvania legislature is encouraging. How far is it a true exponent of public feeling? The resolution passed quite unanimously, indeed, but it is not decisive. Men are always honest, just as they are Antislavery, in the abstract; but it is easy to defeat, by management and specious obstructions, the operation of a principle for which we have been clamorous. Our late credit system and the common maxims of trade have corrupted the people sadly. I am not for setting on foot an anti-commercial society, but the stimulants to trade and money-getting in our country have done incalculable harm.”

“ *February 7, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> I dare say doleful sounds are borne to you across the ocean. Our country is disgraced abroad, but to me its prospects are much brighter at home. It is an immense good that our credit in Europe is so shaken. We have been ruined by the facility of borrowing, and by the madness of speculation which this generated. What we called our prosperity was bloated and false, — the prosperity of a spendthrift. Things, they say, are coming to a *crisis*; which means, that the men who cannot pay will cease to pass for solvent, — that rotten banks will be broken, &c., — that there will be a crash of those who ought to have fallen long ago. But can relief come in any other way? At least, such seems to me the state of things, as I look at it at a distance.

“ I confess, when I look at the mad career of individuals and States, I rather wonder that we are let off so easily. The idea that the country is to sink under its present burdens is absurd beyond measure. That our bank system will work us a great deal of evil, when business revives, I take for granted; but our experience cannot be wholly lost. Perhaps the States which have suffered most may be the first to reform the currency, and may give lessons to their neighbors. Congress is in a bad state, — factious, furious, senseless; and if I did not see that there are mighty causes at work in the country, which a few mad or selfish politicians at Washington cannot control, I might fear. Happily, they waste their strength in fighting against one another, and do nothing; a policy, I apprehend, far wiser than either party left to itself would give us.”

“ *March 1, 1842.*<sup>2</sup> I do not wonder that Europe raises a cry of indignation against this country. I wish it could come to us in thunder. My patriotism does not incline me to cloak the sins of my country. I wish them cured. You, however, must understand how unjust these sweeping censures are. Not a stain rests on the good faith of New England and New York, and of the great majority of the States.

“ Bad faith in public matters and private integrity are not seldom found in strange union. To measure the guilt of these people, you must suppose your countrymen placed in the same situation. You must suppose universal suffrage introduced into Great Britain. Do you think that your national debt would be safer than that of Mississippi? I do not say this by way of excuse, — for none can be made, — but only to show, that, in the most hopeless parts of our country, you meet nothing worse than you find everywhere. Is not your national debt secure, chiefly because the creditors hold the reins of government?

<sup>1</sup> To Harmanus Bleecker, Esq.

<sup>2</sup> To George Combe, Esq.



"I look on this country as in a better condition now than in its 'prosperous days.' These States and individuals borrowed recklessly and spent prodigally. Our prosperity was a show. Now, we know where we stand. Now, a check has been given to the State governments which will never be forgotten, and I think it a great gain that the people have grown jealous of State legislation. Our credit abroad is shaken, and this is a great good; for excess of credit has been almost our ruin. At this moment, even, we are trusted too easily. We have had recently a severe money-pressure, from excess of importations. Could credit and immigration from Europe be exceedingly abridged, our chance would be much better. Another good is, that the monstrous evils of our banking system have been brought to light, and the whole people have learned a lesson of wisdom on this point which must bear powerfully on the government. You hear the word 'distress' in the cities, but the mass of the people enjoy a prosperity unparalleled on the earth.

"I want Europe to shame us out of crimes, and care not how severely our *real* sins are reproved. Nor am I anxious to oppose the misapprehensions of Europe about us; because these can do us no harm, because they are obstinately cherished, and because they must give way at last to the great fact of our progress, if our progress is to continue. Nothing can arrest this progress but war, and divisions growing out of slavery. The opinion of Europe has never troubled me. But to you, who are a true friend of the country and of freedom, I would say, that you need have no fear about us, except that general apprehension which human frailty obliges us to feel about everything below."

"*August 10, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> The trading community suffer much, and this must be, not only from past rashness, but because we have twice as many people in trade as the exchange of the products of the country requires. This is a natural consequence of the spread of education, and will correct itself in time. An educated man would rather live by his wits than his hands, and consequently there has been a great rush into trade, where it was supposed, that, by the union of shrewdness with enterprise, men might grow rich with little toil. We are outgrowing this delusion. Agriculture, the true work of man, is getting into favor and honor, and the next generation may be saved from the crimes and miseries of excessive, unbounded competition in trade."

But though thus just in his recognition of the peculiar temptations and faults of his countrymen, Dr. Channing was not inclined

<sup>1</sup> To William Rathbone, Esq.

to receive passively the indiscriminate criticism of travellers and of foreign nations. It will be seen from the following letters how firm, while candid, he was in asserting the claims of the United States to respect.

“*June 14, 1837.*<sup>1</sup> I am reading Miss Martineau’s book with much interest. I see in it a genuine expression of her mind, and feel that I have the whole of what she thinks of the country. Should other people tell us the whole, should we be equally satisfied? No honest book of travels can be popular in the country of which it treats. She falls into a great many errors, as I expected. But I consider, that, if she does not know us thoroughly, neither do we know ourselves; and we undoubtedly reject as apocryphal what is true. The great fault of the book is its presumption; for what warrant has a traveller, under her circumstances, to pass such decisive judgments on such an infinity of matters? And yet, I do not know a traveller who is not chargeable with the same fault. I seldom hear the conversation of men or women returned from Europe, without being surprised at the sweeping sentence which they pass on what they could not comprehend.

“You see I am very lenient towards the faults of Miss Martineau, whilst I admire her generous, bold, uncompromising adherence to the great principles of freedom and humanity. As to being angry, I cannot; for the opinions of travellers about our country seem to me of too little moment to give anybody uneasiness. . . .

“Her unpardonable sin is, that she is honest. Who of us would bear the honesty which should tell us all our faults? No country is worthy of respect. So says the minister every Sunday, who acknowledges in prayer, and rebukes in preaching, the corruptions around him; and yet, when a stranger tells us of our follies and sins, we wonder at his or her abusiveness. Such occasions show us the real blindness of a people to its own moral evils.”

“*Newport, June 23, 1838.* . . . In the last London Quarterly Review is a review of my Letter on Texas, in which my strictures on our country are treated as proofs of the failure of our popular institutions. I should like to write another letter, to show that these institutions are worthy of higher reverence and confidence than they have yet received, and, under this general topic, to introduce some important truths greatly needed now. This is in my mind, but all attempts at writing have, as yet, exhausted me, and I may not regain strength until the occasion is gone. I do not, however, suffer myself to despond. I have entire, unshaken confidence in God. I know his

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

paternal interest in his human family, and that he will never want instruments for the great work of their regeneration."

"*September 24, 1838.*<sup>1</sup> I offer these remarks, because, in consequence of my Letter on Texas, you seem to look more doubtfully towards this country. I meant that Letter for my own people, and little expected it would draw attention abroad; and I was so desirous to inspire salutary fear and compunction, that I threw into the picture the darker shades only. There is, indeed, much evil here, as there must be in our present civilization. The spirit of gain has seized on all countries, and, whilst it is accomplishing many important purposes, and is perhaps essential to the supplanting of the old aristocracies, and to the forming of new connections among countries which nothing but commerce could bring together, many of its immediate influences are degrading. A selfish, mercenary spirit must become rife. In such an age, the idea of Property may be expected sometimes to take rank of Liberty. Still, I see signs of progress at home."

1839. "I have been struck of late with the disposition throughout Europe to throw the blame of all that is evil in this country on our *free institutions*, as if freedom were the only element of our social constitution. The truth is, that freedom, at this moment particularly, has less influence than other peculiarities in our state. Our most striking peculiarity is, that we are a young people, bringing all the powers of an advanced civilization and very singular energies of industry and enterprise to bear on a new country of inexhaustible resources. Every day discloses to us new mines of wealth. In addition to our own capital, which has increased immensely, foreign capital is pouring in, and opportunities of profitable investment seem to increase in still greater proportion. The consequence you can easily conceive. The minds of the people are intoxicated with a stimulant which human nature has never yet been strong enough to resist. The spirit of speculation, the passion for unbounded accumulation, rages among us. We think little about politics, compared with public improvements, as they are called,—new applications of steam, new settlements in the Far West, &c. In such a state of things, no man has a fixed position. Hardly any man has the strong, local feeling of other countries. A mighty stream of population, bearing away our adventurous youth, is setting westward. Journeys of five hundred or a thousand miles are an amusement to us. The imagination is at work continually on the distant and the vast. The result is a very vigorous though partial development of

<sup>1</sup> To Lant Carpenter, D. D.



human nature. We understand positive material interests better than any other people. . . . But the effect of this boundless external activity is, that the inward, spiritual, higher interests of humanity are little comprehended, prized, or sought. We surpass even England in worldly utilitarianism. The worth of the higher intellectual and moral culture of arts and studies which refine and elevate is not felt as it should be ; but this has nothing to do with our freedom, or is not to be charged on our free institutions.

“ It is a remarkable fact, that, with all this worldly activity, there is a higher standard among us than anywhere else. My personal observation is, indeed, confined very much to Boston. I have seen the population of that place quadrupled, and its wealth multiplied in vastly greater proportion ; and I am confident that there has been a decided advance in religion, philanthropy, and general virtue, as well as in intelligence. . . .

“ For myself, I would we were less prosperous. Our freedom and glory are endangered by our rapid growth, especially by our growth from abroad. Our foreign population is becoming a great evil. Our fathers, never dreaming of what has taken place, and wishing to make our country an asylum for oppressed humanity, began with giving the rights of citizenship on too easy terms, and we have gone on from bad to worse, until the elective franchise is lavished on ignorant hordes from Europe, who cannot but abuse it. This profanation of so high a privilege moves my indignation. You misunderstood me, when you supposed me to say, that our present civilization increases the distance between the higher and lower classes generally. I said, that it creates a more decided pauperism.

“ In closing, let me add, that I do not despair on account of the material tendencies of my countrymen. Perhaps it is well that human nature should work itself out fairly in one direction. It is too noble and various to work always in one way. A higher activity is to manifest itself, though perhaps not in my day.”

“ *March 19, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> I am sorry you have seen so much to the disadvantage of my countrymen, and yet I wish the truth to be seen and told. Not that I expect any sudden changes from the fresh expression of opinion. Our country is swept along by mighty impulses. The causes which act on character are extensive and exceedingly strong. There is so much in our condition to stir up restlessness, wild schemes, extravagant speculation, a grasping spirit, ambition, and fanaticism, in a thousand infectious forms,

<sup>1</sup> To George Combe, Esq.

that there is not much chance for reflection, for moral self-determination. Something may be done to stay the torrent, but merely moral influences cannot avail much. The stern, terrible lessons of Providence are needed by such a people, and these form a part of every nation's experience. It seems to me, that never was a people so tried and tempted as ours. Freedom alone, so unobstructed as we enjoy it, is a sufficient trial; but in addition to this are our immense territory, with its infinite and undeveloped resources, the innumerable openings for enterprise, the new and unexampled applications of science to art, the miracles of machinery, of steam by land and water. All these combined are enough to madden a people. That a worldly, material, mercenary, reckless spirit should spring up amid these circumstances, we must expect.

“ Few look on the present stage of society with less satisfaction than I do; and yet it seems a necessary stage, and I see in it the promise of something better. The commercial system, which is the strongest power of our times, is, for the most part, my abhorrence; and yet I do see that it is breaking down the feudal system, the military system, old distinctions and old alienations, and establishing new ties among men. I therefore hope, nor do I think moral means useless, though other causes are for the time triumphant. You and I may still work in faith. The reckless activity of the people is better than torpidness, and there are good minds open to truth. I suppose I live in the most illuminated region, and I do see, amidst many unpromising circumstances, a spirit of improvement at work, especially among the laboring class.”

Dr. Channing was earnest that the United States should be faithful to their rare privilege of manifesting among the nations a higher form of liberty, justice, peace, and felt an elevating sentiment of honor in view of the glorious destiny to which his country, if worthy, might attain. But longing for the elevation of humanity at large, and looking upon Christendom as a grand fraternity, he watched with most cordial sympathy and joy every struggle for the elevation of the people in all lands. Especially towards England did he turn with gratitude and hope. His desire of friendly relations between the United States and Great Britain, and his profound interest in her political progress, are fully exhibited in his correspondence.

“ *May 27, 1825.* I was sorry to discover in your remarks something of what I may call the bigotry of republicanism, by which I mean the persuasion, that liberty can only subsist under such institutions as ours, and the consequent habit of looking with a hostile

eye on all other institutions. This seems to me an example of an error so common as to deserve a place among Bacon's idols, the error of confounding the means with the end. You speak as if we alone were free, because we alone act throughout on the system of *election*, when England, our mother, and the fountain of all our liberal institutions, is free in spite of an hereditary king and nobility. It is wrong to suppose that public opinion can embody and express itself only through elections. There are other ways; perhaps there is no country in the world where public opinion reigns more than in England. Yet you have made no distinction between that country and the other monarchies of Europe.

"It grieved me that, in so excellent a discourse, anything should be said or implied to diminish the sympathy, already too faint, with that admirable country, on which God has bestowed for two centuries the signal honor of being the bulwark of Protestant and free principles. Nowhere on earth will you find a people more high-minded, more jealous of their rights, more bold in expressing their thoughts, more resolute and earnest in putting forth all the powers of human nature, than in England; and irrecconcilable as the fact may be with our theories, we there see, under an aristocracy which holds a large part of the real estate of the kingdom, an improved and productive agriculture, giving to the country an aspect of beauty and fruitfulness, which makes this and other countries appear as if they were but half redeemed from a state of nature.

"True liberty rests upon and consists in nothing so much as a *free press*, that is, in intellectual liberty, in liberty to think and speak, and to influence other minds to the full extent of the individual's power. This creates what we call public opinion, an influence which cannot be said to exist anywhere in Europe, save in England, and which operates there with astonishing energy. The power of the press in England is exceedingly aided by local causes. The existence of a metropolis like London—that 'mighty heart' through which the whole blood of the empire circulates, and which sends forth, in a single day, through every village the report of a public man's services or misdeeds—produces a quick common feeling, communicates an electric impulse to the whole body, of which no other country is susceptible. The power of public opinion has been remarkably manifested in the change whereby the restrictive system, which has been looked to for ages as a nation's safeguard and source of wealth, is giving way to the improved intelligence of the people, and the freest doctrines as to the intercourse of nations are not only avowed, but embodied into the



commercial code. Look at the immense public works of England, carried on, not by government, but by private associations; and who is not struck with the confidence of man in man, the power of equal laws, and the unbounded energy of character, implied in these? . . . .

“The amount of what I would say is this. I wish that we might speak more diffidently of ourselves, and in more conciliatory language of others; that we might seek the liberation of the world by improvement rather than convulsion; that we might ‘preach peace’ to monarchs and subjects; that we might never speak of war, especially of civil war, but with the aversion and horror which Christianity and philanthropy inspire. As for kings, whilst we remember that they are men like ourselves, and not a whit better than their poorest subjects, let us not deny them the candor and kindness due to *men*. They are made masters of nations by the accident of birth, not by their own will, and most of them, if they would, could not innocently abdicate their thrones; for nations, untrained to the functions of self-government, if suddenly called to their exercise, would soon fill the vacant thrones with worse tyrants than their old masters. Liberty is not the growth of violence. It is, indeed, the greatest political good, ‘to be prized above all price’; but it is also a moral good, and is to be diffused by nothing so effectually as by that spirit of love which makes man dear to man, and by which Christianity, in proportion as it is better understood, will bind together all orders of society.”

“*Boston, November 30, 1827.*<sup>1</sup> I desire to do something to make our two countries better acquainted with each other, and I know no way so effectual as a free interchange of thought between those who without vanity may lay claim to some enlargement of mind.

“I see what is called national spirit working a thousand evils, but it is never worse employed than in separating two countries which are the chosen abodes of freedom, and which are intrusted with the dearest interests of the human race. I know that this feeling of nationality has done good, especially in rude ages, when men could not take in a larger idea than that of tribe or country, and when no other motive of a generous kind could counteract selfish and sordid tendencies. I can admire Roman patriotism, unjust and cruel as it was; for it carried the individual in a measure out of himself, or, more properly, gave a generous cast to his selfishness; but I should mourn if I thought the human mind capable of nothing nobler, and I am sure that Christianity is meant to

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe.

pour a quite different and more celestial fervor through the soul. We owe to nationality national independence, not civil and personal liberty; and this last is the great interest and hope of human nature. Let its friends, however separated by oceans or tongues, feel themselves brethren, and cherish a union stronger than that of country.

“This may be thought an interest for *men* only to think and write about. But believing, as I do, that liberty is a *moral* good, to be promoted, not by the sword, but by magnanimity of thought and feeling, by a conviction of what we were made for, of the dignity of our intellectual and moral being, I feel that woman may do her full share towards the liberation of the world.”

“*September* 24, 1838.<sup>1</sup> I anticipate from steam navigation increased intercourse between the two countries of a higher character than has subsisted yet. Hitherto we have exchanged commercial agents, and have known one another by specimens of the money-getting tribe, and those not the best. I hope the intelligent, refined, religious, elevated, will now represent the two countries to each other. If our mother will send some of her worthiest sons to see us, I am sure they will not make her grieve over a degenerate posterity. She will recognize in us, perhaps, some of her own faults, and the faults of youth goaded to excess by peculiar temptations; but I am inclined to believe that she will find few of her works to take more pride in than in this same rebellious but vigorous republic of ours. I call it her work, not merely because she sent out a generous stock that has shot up into a great people, but because our institutions are the expansions of her own free principles.”

“*Boston, October* 25, 1840.<sup>2</sup> Your little island is too small a basis for so vast an empire, and it is hard to find a statesman equal to the comprehension of so many and such complicated interests. You meet the fate of all conquering states. To keep what you have, you must grasp more, and every new acquisition is a new point for assault. Your business with China is a sad one. England is to reconcile the world to her ascendancy in the East, by showing herself the friend, guardian, civilizer of less improved *racés*. That she should be the chief cultivator of a physical and *moral* poison, should labor to force it on a less improved people, and should then turn against this defenceless people the terrors of European warfare, — all this does little credit to her humanity, and shows that in pushing her trade she cares very little for the influence she exerts on the world. Believing, as I do, that England rests on her moral strength, I lament this wound on her good name,

<sup>1</sup> To Lant Carpenter, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To William Rathbone, Esq.

as well as shudder at the miseries she is about to inflict in another hemisphere."

"*Newport, July 11, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> In regard to your Chartists, I have a strong interest in them; but I do not know that I can serve them, except by recommending, as I have tried to do, the cause and rights of the depressed and injured to the sympathy and consciences of their fellow-creatures.

"I differ from the Chartists in their fundamental point, *immediate* universal suffrage. Suffrage is not merely a power given to the individual for protection of his own rights, but a power of acting on the most sacred rights and interests of the whole community; and if he is *palpably* disqualified to act on these justly and wisely, the power should not be granted. Every individual ought, however, to have the means of qualifying himself for suffrage. The state ought to spare no pains to raise every member from that brutal ignorance and degradation which unfits him for all public action. The cry of the Chartists should be for immediate universal *education*, and for such an education as would prepare them for the elective franchise. In the Chartist book which you refer to, I was greatly pleased and encouraged by finding that this party had discovered the true means of freedom. Nothing but general illumination can give them influence. Enlighten a people, and even under the worst institutions they will be felt. The elective franchise brings no liberty to a grossly ignorant multitude. They are only made the tools of those who can bribe or inflame them, and generally fall into the hands of their enemies. I hope the Chartist project of education will be carried out. If a generous enthusiasm could lead to the formation of a fraternity of teachers among them, who, from love to their brethren, and in a spirit of self-sacrifice, would give themselves up to the instruction of the young, much good might be accomplished.

"I could point out passages in the Chartist pamphlet which I disapproved. Nothing, however, gave me so much sorrow as the apparent want of a just feeling of the importance of religion to the people. Religion is important, essential, to us all, our light and life, and the only source of dignity, freedom, and peace. I do not, however, wonder, that so many of the people look on religion as their foe, for it has been a state instrument, a political machine, and is used to keep them down, and not to raise them up. But can they read the New Testament and help seeing that Jesus Christ treated the distinctions of this world with contempt, — that he lived among the poor as his brethren, — that he came to unite all

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Sturge, Esq.



men in brotherhood, — that he utterly reprobates the passion for power, through which the few have always trodden on the many, — that his religion is the peaceful remedy for all oppression, and that, even where it does not break the yoke, it can give to the oppressed dignity and peace?

“Christianity — not as taught by the state, but as taught by its Founder — is eminently the friend of the multitude, — their charter, their emancipator, as well as the foundation of immortal hope. I do not wonder at the existence of scepticism among the Chartists; but it is a mournful and discouraging fact, and, to my mind, one of the saddest effects of the unnatural social system which crushes them. I know, however, that the evil is but a temporary one. Some reformer who will comprehend the liberal, enlarged spirit of Christianity, and utter it in words of fire, may, at any moment, spring up amongst them. If not, time, experience, and the good providence of God, will work their deliverance.”

“*September 26, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> These general views give me great hope about England. When I think of the great amount of intellect, good principle, benevolence, power, wealth, among you, I feel as if you must work your way through your difficulties. *How*, I know not; for I am too far off, and perhaps were I on the spot I should be as much perplexed; but one thing I know, — that there was never before, in an equal space, such an amount of good influences as in England, — never so many people interested in upholding order, — never so many clear thinkers. Out of all this something must grow. I have great faith, too, in our Anglo-Saxon blood. We Anglo-Saxons have much that is bad in us. I doubt whether, through this race, the world is to be saved; but for practical energy, for skill in surmounting difficulties, for richness of resource, we are unrivalled. That England, with her immense wealth, and with half the world under her sway, should sink under her present difficulties, I cannot believe. We Americans should solve the problem somehow or other, and you are not behind us.”

1842.<sup>2</sup> “It gives the enlightened part of our community much pleasure to observe of late in the English press a disposition to be more just to our country; not that our appetite for praise is very craving, but because it seems important to us that nations between which such strong bonds of union subsist as between England and America, and to which the interests of freedom and reformed Christianity are specially confided by Providence, should not be alienated from each other by the aspersions of malignity and party spirit. A

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe.

man who can visit this country, and not see in our institutions and manners the means of developing the noblest faculties and sentiments of human nature, must be incapable of just and high thinking; and I pity an American who can leave your shores without a grateful sense of the unparalleled services you have rendered to the cause of human improvement, and without rejoicing in the powerful springs of happiness and moral and intellectual progress which are in operation among you."

Dr. Channing's sympathies were nowise limited to England, warm as was his grateful reverence for the mother-land of the Anglo-Saxons, but cordially embraced all Continental Europe. Heart and hand he held himself pledged, as a faithful brother, to the great party of Liberalism spread throughout civilized nations, and his earnest prayer was for universal freedom by conservative reform, — if, indeed, peace could cure the corruptions of centuries. During the great crisis of 1830 he thus expressed his feelings: —

"Amidst the stupendous events of our age, when the whole civilized world is heaving like an ocean, and the great question of human freedom is at issue, I see not how they who love their race can be indifferent. A great war is going on, that of opinions and principles, and we have too much reason to dread that this will bring on a war of arms and bloodshed. I have no fear as to the result, but I shudder at this means of gaining even the greatest good."

When the news, therefore, of the "Three Days" in Paris reached Newport, his heart leaped up within him in exulting hope; the era of emancipation he had so long been looking for, it seemed to him, had dawned; and he returned much earlier than usual to Boston to exchange congratulations with the friends of constitutional liberty, and to pour out from his pulpit the bright anticipations with which his mind was crowded. To his sorrow, he found but slight response to his enthusiasm, and felt more deeply than ever before how benumbing to high honor and humanity is the heavy pressure of mercenariness. With some of his intimate friends, indeed, and especially with Charles Follen, he held earnest communion on the magnificent opportunity opened to the Continental nations; and his aspirations were constant, that France might be found worthy of her great vocation. The Revolution of 1830 appeared to him to be, in its principles, methods, aims, and especially in its pervading spirit, a great advance upon its predecessor; and he looked forward confidently to the redeeming power which it was to exert upon Italy, Germany, and Poland. The reappearance of Lafayette, in

so commanding a position, gratified him exceedingly; and the mingled firmness and calmness of the French people showed, he thought, a fine development of moral feeling and enlightened judgment. That the freemen of America, especially the young, should be so moderate in their expressions of joy, astonished him. He went back, in memory, to his boyish days, when the Cambridge collegians had processions, speeches, and bonfires. Now, all was still. One evening, during this period, a graduate called upon him. "Well, Mr. Hillard," said he, with an accent of sarcasm, which few, probably, ever heard from his lips, "are you, too, *so old* and *so wise*, like the young men at Harvard, as to have no foolish enthusiasm to throw away upon the heroes of the Polytechnic School?" "Sir," answered Hillard, "you seem to me to be the only young man I know." "Always young for liberty, I trust," replied Dr. Channing, with a bright smile, and a ringing tone, as he pressed him warmly by the hand.

Dr. Channing's sermons, at this period, were strongly tinged, through their whole course of thought, with fresh hopes for the elevation of the people. He sought to teach his hearers how to "honor all men,"<sup>1</sup> and to rouse them to a deeper interest in man as man. People complained of the present tameness of life, he taught, because they were indolent and worldly; but now, as ever, existence was rich with romantic interest, and heroes might to-day, as in past ages, renovate their race by embodying great principles in great actions. The age of chivalry might reappear in a far sublimer and purer form, and make these days splendid by a manifestation of loyalty, courage, energy, self-sacrifice, in industry, trade, and social intercourse. In a word, he seized the occasion to bring home to his fellow-men the possibility of conforming internal legislation, foreign politics, and all human relations to the heavenly model of Christian brotherhood.

Extracts from letters will indicate the just and liberal sympathy with which he watched the progress of the Continental nations of Europe.

"*Boston, September 22, 1830.* I am very much interested by the news from France. With many, many fears, I have more hopes, it seems to me, than anybody."

"*August 1, 1831.* You have heard, I suppose, that the Poles have been unsuccessful in a battle with the Russians. Perhaps the right side will not prevail now, but it will by and by. We must

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. II. pp. 299-314. One Volume Edition, pp. 96-116.



never despair. I am waiting with great solicitude for the next news."

1832. "I enclose — some money for the Poles. I grieve that I can do no more at present. My heart aches for these suffering patriots. We will try to aid them more by and by."

"*Boston, December 8, 1832.*<sup>1</sup> In regard to Poland, our distance from her, and our inability to render her any physical aid, have checked our sympathies. We have, however, one mode of aiding her, if we understood and would use it. The public opinion of nations is growing more and more powerful, and a general expression of horror from the civilized and Christian world would be heard and respected even at St. Petersburg. Is not the time coming when governments will solemnly protest against cruelty and oppression, wherever practised, and will feel themselves debtors to the cause of humanity as truly as individuals?"

"*April 22, 1837.*<sup>2</sup> Your observations on society in Germany satisfied me that the good work of improvement is going on. I should infer that you had found persons of rank more alive to their responsibilities, more disposed to sympathize with their inferiors, than I have imagined. This I should rejoice in, even if it opposed my republican theories; but it does not. I cannot doubt that despotic institutions have been very much mitigated and improved by the existence of more liberal ones, just as Protestantism has reformed Catholicism. Nor do I believe that absolute princes and nobles are doing better from calculation merely, — from the desire of securing their power by showing it to be beneficial. This, no doubt, has its influence; but from better principles they desire also to introduce into their own domains the improvements which are springing up elsewhere. It is one good fruit of the present free communication among nations, that nothing good can be shut up. I shall not be surprised to learn that there is even more virtue and happiness in some parts of Europe than here. . . .

"Your letter delighted me by the accounts you gave me of the condition of the lowest class in some parts of Germany, and of the results of efforts for juvenile reformation. I beg you to keep these objects steadily in view. Your work is to serve your country, by spreading among us a knowledge of what is done for the elevation of men elsewhere. The ignorance here on such matters is wonderful, and confined to no class; there are philanthropic spirits prepared to carry out any great ideas."

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe.

<sup>2</sup> To George Ticknor, Esq.

“*September 10, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> I have followed one rule in life,—to speak for myself, to avoid identifying myself with others, to take on myself the responsibility of my own views alone. Shall I, by publishing in the —, be considered as fighting under any standard but my own? Unless the individual be made exclusively responsible, I cannot, indeed, think of writing; for I can say nothing on political subjects without showing my republican heart. I have of course thought much of the French Revolution. I look at it, I will not say in peculiar lights, but in a different way from the common one, and I think I should like to give in an article some juster views of it. In connection with this subject, my ethical, religious, — not sectarian, — as well as political views, would come out. I can do nothing unless I am free, — unless I can say what I think and feel in the language in which truth naturally clothes itself in my mind. The article, then, if I write it, will aim at no concealment, will not affect the style of a different country, but will be a simple, frank utterance to a free people of what a distant freeman thinks on the most pregnant, solemn portion of history.

“I wish to give the impressions of a man who has *lived through the Revolution*, and to show how far our views and hopes of society ought to be modified by it. The enemies of reform use it as their chief weapon, and I think wrongfully. In pursuing the subject, I may find myself in an error, and shall, I trust, cheerfully accept the truth. No theory will blind me to the atrocities of the Revolution.”

“*March 1, 1842.*<sup>2</sup> I beg you to continue your sketches of German character. I have much love for this people, without understanding them as well as I wish. I think of them as more genial, kindly, unconscious, single-hearted, and confiding, than we are. The grandest principle of our nature, the sense of the infinite, seems to be more developed in them, and their writings express a deeper consciousness, a keener perception of the unity of the universe. We in this country, perhaps, see the best of them, that is, we see men who have been obliged to leave their native land for their devotion to freedom and impatience of wrong. In these we see nothing of what is thought to be the defect of their country; I mean, want of decision, of energy, of will, the energy which realizes one's speculations and convictions as to the right, true, and good. Dr. Follen was distinguished by the heroic *will*. It is not easy to reconcile all we hear about the Germans. Most accounts make them more sensual than we are, and mournfully defective in purity.

<sup>1</sup> To the Rev. James Martineau.

<sup>2</sup> To George Combe, Esq.

I hope you will continue your inquiries as to the last particular. Licentiousness seems to be the great stain on our civilization, and there can be nothing worse."

Looking upon Christendom as a growing whole, where the vitality of every part reacts upon every other, and longing for the era of freedom and order made one by universal justice to all human interests and to every individual, Dr. Channing was anxious that the United States should work out thoroughly the social problem assigned to her, and thus aid her sister nations upward to more friendly and honorable institutions. His thoughts in regard to the reciprocal influence of the Old World and the New are thus expressed.

"*October, 1839.*<sup>1</sup> You speak in your last of the increased connection between Europe and America. The great question I ask myself is, Which of the two continents will exert the greatest influence on the other? I suppose, at first, there will be an increase of the aristocratic spirit and feeling in our cities, which are already too much disposed to sympathize with the exclusives abroad. Our literature, too, in its state of childhood, may for a time be more dependent on foreign literature. The natural development of our institutions and national character will be more interfered with. Spiritual objects will, for a time, be more lost sight of. But I trust freedom is a mightier and more contagious principle than the opposite, and that, in the long run, its influence will be more felt. The present stage of civilization is a necessary one, and will follow its own course; but the very fact of its necessity gives me hope. I wish, indeed, to see some nobler aims, a higher direction of this newly developed activity. But the child grows strong in mind as well as body by acting on matter and seeking physical good, and the race may need the same discipline. We must try, that the Old World may hear some generous, inspiring tones from the New."

Enthusiastic at once and patient, eager for progress, yet reverencing existing good, liberal in sympathy and cheering words to every method of reform, buoyant in hope amid all vicissitudes, fearing only the crippling influence of fear, trusting Providence perfectly, Dr. Channing looked steadily forward to the brightening future. The following letters will show how truly he described himself as "always young for liberty."

"*July 28, 1839.*<sup>2</sup> My faith in the progress of truth, humanity, and piety is in no degree shaken; but the state of the world joins

<sup>1</sup> To Dr. Charles Follen.

<sup>2</sup> To the Rev. Henry Channing.



with all history in showing me that the great designs of Providence unfold slowly, — that is, slowly to us, creatures of a day, — and that another, perhaps very distant, age is to witness that triumph of the spirit of Christianity which we expect. We all see that civil liberty has not produced that sudden melioration and exaltation of human nature which was confidently hoped; nor has religious liberty borne all the fruits we hoped. Still, a good work is going on. Slavery and bigotry and worldliness will not reign forever.”

“*Newport, October 5, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> I am glad when our good and wise men go abroad, as they must do something to bring on that blessed day when the friends of humanity and religion in all countries, forgetting all inferior distinctions, will unite in the work of recovering the world from error, misery, and sin.”

“*Boston, October 24, 1840.*<sup>2</sup> Mr. Robertson gave a noble character to the Westminster. What gratified me particularly in that work was its enlarged, candid, liberal tone of thought. It was just to conservatism, just to the past, — rare merits among us liberals. Perhaps we have been as bigoted as our opponents; nor is it to be wondered at. The terrible abuses of the past, contrasted with the bright hues which the imagination throws over the future, have naturally enough put us out of patience. But our faith in human nature should teach us that it cannot have existed so many ages without putting forth much that is glorious and worthy of grateful commemoration, and the law of progress teaches us that the seeds of something better are to be looked for in the past. I confess I need these lessons myself. I am so accustomed to measure what has been, and is, by the idea of the good, the perfect, which Christianity gives me, that a deep discontent gets possession of me, and I find no peace but in flying to brighter coming ages. I ought to be more just, and some articles in the Westminster have helped me in this particular. I do not mean that this is its only merit; but in this way it has done much for the liberal cause; for nothing serves a cause more than to give a large wisdom to its advocates.

“I desire much that there should be a powerful work among you, devoted to liberal principles. Are they not to pass through a severe trial? Are they not suffering the natural consequences of having promised much more than they have performed? Are they not suffering from the follies and vices of their professed friends? Is not conservatism more distrustful? Is there not a point at which commerce ceases to liberalize, and becomes a pillar of aristocracy? Is not the worldliness of this commercial age altogether

<sup>1</sup> To Francis Wayland, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

irreconcilable with religious inquiry, and a thirst for higher truth? And are there no signs of a wider prevalence of the principle of authority? . . . . The conclusion is, that nothing can be done but by spreading large views, great truths, — by waking up in men some consciousness of what they were made for, and of the design of their union in society. How to lift their heads above the mist they now live in, is the question. Much may be done by a truly good review. Amidst all apparent reactions, there is decided progress. . . . . I wish I could promise something, but I am trying to give myself to the work for which I have been living all my life. Whether I shall do anything I know not, for all efforts exhaust me; but I must cease from spending my strength in occasional labors. There are, however, one or two topics which I have long wanted to discuss. One is, the position of the present age, what place it holds in the world's history, what are its relations to the past and future, its work, its prospects. In other words, I would help the age to understand itself."

"*September 26, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> I suppose I should pass for a wiser man, if I hoped less on most subjects. Wisdom is thought to be fearful, — an old woman with wrinkled, anxious brow. But under an empire of infinite goodness, it seems as rational to trust the signs of good as those of evil. I look more and more at the great laws of our own nature and of universal nature, and I am sure these are working for glorious results. The present dark appearances may be traced very much to the increased activity of the human mind. Men see, think, inquire, want, claim, and therefore murmur more. They understand more their rights and wrongs, and are enlightened enough to trace to bad institutions what they used to refer to fixed laws of nature. In their greater activity, they run against one another. In such a state of things there must be much partial development, much half-truth, much conflict of the old and the new. But I am very slow to believe that the growth of men's powers is an evil, that they are to suffer ultimately from looking farther into things, from comprehending more what is due to them, from becoming more active and efficient."

"*August 10, 1842.* Happily, the outward striking events which alarm us are of little importance, compared with the silent changes which are going on in society, in its modes of thought, of industry, of education, of intercourse, — changes which often escape our observation, but which determine the coming ages. How little we understand our own times or their tendencies! My ignorance becomes hope under the perfect government of God."

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

## CHAPTER VI. — FRIENDS.

FRIENDSHIP reveals its perfect form, and puts forth its richest bloom and fruit, only where universal philanthropy and cordial private attachments blend in one person. This rare union was beautifully manifested in Dr. Channing. We have seen how diffusive was his humanity, and with what unmeasured sympathy he joined hands in the wide circle of mankind, interlinked the earth round through the ages. We are now to see the truth and tenderness of his affection in intimate relations. To a degree which is uncommon in days so anxious, restless, and fluent as our own, he kept firm and fresh the friendships of his youth and early manhood.

Dr. Tuckerman was once asked whether he knew Dr. Channing. "Know him!" he replied; "he, Mr. Phillips, and I are like three spirits in one." And each of the friends referred to would have described, in equally strong terms, the nearness of their communion. Classmates in college, and in the opening years of mature life settled in one neighborhood, attraction and accident had most closely intertwined their thoughts, feelings, and actions. In their characters, pursuits, conditions, there was just that proportion of affinity and contrast which produces full accord. Of his cordial reverence for each of those chosen companions, Dr. Channing has fortunately left memorials which will unite their names and images indissolubly.<sup>1</sup> But this biography would be imperfect without bearing on its pages some bright token of the relation which did so much to confirm and fulfil their varied virtues.

Of Mr. Phillips, Dr. Channing once wrote to an acquaintance: "He is one of the intuitive men, whom I take delight in much more than in the merely logical. In truth, he is a remarkable man, an earnest lover of his fellow-creatures, and possessed with an invincible trust in their progress, an enlightened and fervent friend of liberty, undiscouraged by the dark omens which are the trials of human faith, and deeply interested in whatever affects the rights and improvement of the great body of the people. That noble intellect was made for a world of light, that noble heart for a society of truth and honor, in which it might expand joyfully and freely."

To Dr. Tuckerman, Dr. Channing thus expresses his warm affection: "Your friendship is among my greatest blessings, — I was about to say earthly blessings; but Christian friendship is of heaven."

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. V. pp. 101, 102; Vol. VI. pp. 93-137. One Volume Edition, pp. 818, 819; 578-599.



The hearts, minds, homes, of these three friends, were freely open to one another; they were, in the best sense of the words, each other's father-confessors; their spiritual wealth was in common, — they were truly one.

To this trio was added, in later years, Charles Follen, — dear to each, but bound to Dr. Channing by ties of peculiar nearness. Of this honored man, also, his friend has left an imperishable monument.<sup>1</sup> But a record of his regard should appear here. In a letter to Dr. Follen, he wrote: —

“There are few with whom I feel myself so strongly united, and the years are fast flying in which I can enjoy such friendships on earth. But we cannot dispose of ourselves here. We will cherish unity of spirit; and this will secure a meeting at last.”

And immediately after Dr. Follen's death, he thus manifested the sense of his own loss: —

“*February 1, 1841.* My sensibilities have been drawn on a good deal of late. You have heard of the death of —, an almost overwhelming blow to us all, which I was summoned to mitigate by sympathy and spiritual counsels. Then came the burning of the Lexington; and that called me to weep, not for others only, but for myself. The loss of Dr. Follen is, indeed, one of the greatest bereavements of my life. In his case, I had found that spiritual ties may be as strong as those of nature. He was one of the few men who won my heart and confidence at first. I saw almost intuitively that he was a true man, — that he had an unconquerable force of soul joined with the sweetest affections, — that he was not the slave of opinions or circumstances, but that he obeyed freely a divine law in his own soul. He has done me good.”

Finally, after reading the beautiful life, in which, with such transparent truth and depth and delicacy of natural feeling, the magnanimous character of Charles Follen is revealed, Dr. Channing paid this tribute of unreserved admiration to his memory: —

“*Germantown, May 11, 1842.*<sup>2</sup> I received your letter, by a singular coincidence, just as I was finishing the reading of your biography. . . . It brings before me, in the colors of truth and nature, the friend whom I honored and loved above most friends. It gives to the world one bright proof more of the reality, beauty, and grandeur of disinterested virtue. Such sweetness and such noble-

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. V., pp. 248-259. One Volume Edition, pp. 613-618.

<sup>2</sup> To Mrs. Charles Follen.

ness have seldom been joined. . . . Such a history, indeed, awakens self-reproach. I feel myself in the presence of supreme virtue. I feel how little I have sacrificed, in comparison, to truth, freedom, the cause of humanity. But I rejoice that humanity has found more fervent friends, and they speak to me from a better world, I hope not in vain."

With numerous other friends among his peers in age, and among those younger as well as older than himself, Dr. Channing was united by cordial confidence. Absorbed in subjects of profound interest, both speculative and practical, naturally diffident, refined even to fastidiousness in his tastes, quickly appreciating all forms of character, and keenly sensitive to the morbid feelings by which untuned spirits communicate their discord even to one who has attained to unity, he was yet so tender, generous, tolerant, thoughtful, conscientious, and full of respect and hope, that, though by no means social, he yet found continually enlarging round him the circle of those to whom he was closely knit by honor, mutual trust, and warm affection. Many whom his reserve at first repelled became the most devotedly attached to him, as acquaintance revealed to their observation his traits of justice, magnanimity, and unwavering disinterestedness. Especially with women of high and enlarged tempers, whose minds were trained by study and experience, did he joyfully feel himself at home. To them he could freely unveil his native enthusiasm, his fine perceptions of order and fitness, his love of beauty in nature and art, his romantic longings for a pure-toned society, his hopes of humanity made glorious by heavenly virtue. And his profound reverence for woman's nature and function gave that charm of unaffected courtesy to his manner, look, and tone, which won them liberally to exchange their cherished thoughts, as with an equal. It was in these friendships with women, therefore, that many of his brightest hours were passed. Full extracts from his correspondence will best show the richness of his sympathies. They may be thus suitably introduced.

"I send a line, — only a line, — that you may have a visible token of remembrance. Our frail nature, I know, likes this; and yet you need it not. You mingle much with our thoughts, and still more, when not thought of, you are with us. Do you not know what it is to have a kind of latent remembrance of friends, even when they are not directly present to the mind? We have a secret consciousness of their existence, which makes the world a brighter spot to us. A light comes from them, as from the sun, when other things are thought of."

"*Boston, July 7, 1824.*<sup>1</sup> Were not the associations so serious, the vanity of your sex might be gratified by thinking that the actual deity of a large part of the Catholic world is a woman, 'the blessed Mary,' and that among Protestants no human being receives a homage so nearly approaching worship as Mother Anne from the Shakers. Are these facts to be explained by the desire which our weak, suffering nature has for a parental deity, and by the more intense, lovely, and touching exhibition of parental love in woman than in man?"

"*July 19, 1824.* I suppose you have heard that — has succeeded in finding that great comfort of life, a good house, sufficiently spacious, and pleasantly situated. I always think that a woman looks on such a house with something of the feeling with which a sovereign surveys his empire, and not without some reason, for within that little province, home, her power is as absolute, and its order and happiness are even more dependent on her wisdom and virtue. A house is a mirror of a woman's mind, and it is natural that she should desire one in which the presiding genius may be seen to some advantage."

"*Boston, October 28, 1825.*<sup>2</sup> May it not be one of the recompenses and joys of good men after death, to know the influence of their characters and lives on those whom they left behind? And if so, I am sure the benevolent spirit, of which you have given us an affecting record, must derive from this world a happiness not unworthy of heaven. It is rare to meet with the union of so much sensibility with such innocence and freedom from all excess, as in Mr. Goodier. He belonged to that small class which we call faultless; and his blamelessness was not owing to a want of ardor or a natural moderation of desire which supplied the place of self-government. There is a character of truth and reality in his expressions of religious feeling, of which we feel the need in those forced and feverish 'experiences' which form the staple of religious biography."

"*Boston, November 30, 1828.*<sup>2</sup> I had heard, before receiving your letter, of your father's indisposition, and have received frequent accounts of his state of health. Do assure him of my affectionate and respectful remembrances. I can well understand the greatness of his literary privations. But philanthropy sustained by religion is a more durable and a nobler excitement than literature, and furnishes the mind and heart with more unfailing objects of interest; and I know that your father has this spring of consolation and joy.

<sup>1</sup> To the Misses Roscoe.

<sup>2</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe.



He has not, indeed, succeeded in some plans of reform very dear to him. But his labors will not be lost. It is no small thing to set minds to work on great subjects; and of one thing I am more and more satisfied, that liberal and philanthropic principles are not advancing less surely because they make their way slowly. At least, I see them often suffering by men's acting upon them precipitately, or without a sufficient comprehension of their nature and bearings."

"*September 9, 1829.*<sup>1</sup> I was very much gratified by your account of your father's pursuits, and of the serenity of his mind under so much infirmity of body. What a delightful and encouraging example of the power of moral and intellectual culture, of piety, philanthropy, and of sensibility to the good and beautiful, over what are called the evils of life! I rejoice with him in the recent triumphs of tolerant and liberal principles. Assure him of my affectionate respect."

"*January 22, 1830.* The office to which your letter calls me, of ministering to a mind diseased, is, you well know, one of the most difficult, because physical maladies almost always have a large share in mental ones, and because inward suffering so often springs from an individuality, a peculiarity of mind, which another cannot easily comprehend. I think, however, that the desolateness, the sinking of soul, which you describe, is sufficiently common to be in some sense understood. Shall I tell you that I have felt it, that I have walked through thicker darkness, that I have known what loneliness of heart is? I say this that I may not be thought a stranger to the hidden woe which I desire to assuage. I believe, in this desolation which you so affectingly reveal, a self-sustaining, self-resisting power must spring up in our own breasts. No foreign agency can do for us what we need. Sympathy, tenderness, unless singularly wise, may only debilitate us. An energy must be put forth within. We must rely on our own resources. . . . .

"If I were called to give counsel to a susceptible and highly gifted woman, wounded in her tenderest affection and ready to despond, I should say, Understand and honor yourself. Feel that you have within you a spirit too divine ever to be given up in despair, or to be sacrificed to any earthly disappointment. Feel how unjust you are to yourself in suffering any human being to arrest in its progress such a mind as yours. Remember that you were made to love infinitely and to love forever, and let no ill-requested affection shut up this unfathomed fountain.

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Jane E. Roscoe.

“It may be your lot to suffer through your whole present being ; but be conscientiously faithful to the duties of a suffering state, and you will every moment strengthen the ties which bind you to the Infinite Parent, to his glorious spiritual family, and will hasten the period in which purer love, happier friendship, than we can know here will be yours. I would not repress your desire of death. I know no privilege so great as that of dying ; but it is a privilege to those in whom evil is more and more subdued, and who go more and more beyond themselves. This disinterested, self-sacrificing philanthropy I should rejoice to awaken in you and in myself, a deeper consciousness of our own spiritual nature, more self-subsistence, a trust in the godlike principle within us which forms the very essence of our being, and in the infinite love of God to this ray of Divinity in his creatures. Nothing can injure us but unfaithfulness to ourselves, but the want of a just awe of our own minds. Through the want of this, we become slaves to circumstances and to fellow-beings. In cherishing it, I find myself strong and free.”

“*St. Croix, March 12, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> Your accounts of — are the saddest I have received. I feel as if she were one of my family. And is one so blameless, so disinterested, so useful, so lovely, to be taken from us? I do hope that she is to be spared. I can slowly give up the excellent. What a loss she will be ! It is a great happiness to me to believe that I have contributed something to the excellence of her character. She had a conversation with me, in which she was solicitous to express how much she felt herself indebted to me for whatever improvement she had made, and especially for her first deep impressions of religion. I doubt not her grateful spirit exaggerated the obligation ; but to have done anything to fit such a spirit for heaven is an inexpressible privilege. I did not imagine, till she told me, that my influence had been so happy.

“May I not hope, that, in other cases, I have done unknown good? This is one of the consolations of the Christian minister, when no striking visible effects follow his labors. He may have comforted sorrow of which he never dreamed, touched strings in the heart which have vibrated unheard, and pierced the conscience with salutary but unuttered pangs. In truth, all the friends of humanity and religion are probably instruments of greater good than they see, and the rewards of a future world may be the discovery of a beneficent influence which they exerted without suspecting it.”

“*December 25, 1831.* May I here be allowed to refer to two

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. C. Codman.

highly valued and honored friends, who within a few days have been taken from us, and whose characters have helped to confirm to me these cheering views of the influence of Christ. These excellent women bore strongly on their characters the impress of Jesus. They became what they were under the influence of his spirit and virtue, and may therefore properly find a place in a discourse dedicated to the commemoration of his birth.

“The name of Miss Hannah Adams is familiar to you all, for her literary claims have been recognized abroad as well as at home. She worshipped with us until infirmity obliged her to deny herself the privilege of visiting the house of God, and considered herself to the last as connected with this congregation. Her heart was early touched by the religion of Christ, and it was her interest in this subject which guided all her literary labors. Her first work was ‘A View or History of Religions’; and in conducting the difficult task of recording the variety of opinions and denominations to which Christianity has given birth, she showed how strongly the spirit of its great Founder had taken possession of her mind. In no instance has she breathed the slightest scorn or unkindness towards those who differed from her most widely, nor has any class of Christians complained of the least want of candor and uprightness in expounding their views.

“Her character was marked by the spirit of love. It was this which gave to her friends the chief interest in her character. Under the power of this principle, she looked on the creation of God with a delight almost peculiar to herself. I have never heard from human lips such sincere, unaffected, overflowing joy in the beautiful and beneficent works of God, as has broken from hers. This same love bound her by strong, indestructible bonds to those in whose character she saw the proofs of true goodness. Her admiration of virtue rose to enthusiasm. She had been distinguished by the kindness and friendship of one whom none can forget that ever saw him, — the late Mr. Buckminster, — and the tender, reverential feeling with which she clung to his memory was a delightful proof of the constancy of human affection. I believe that in no breast, beyond his immediate relatives, was his image so sacredly cherished as in hers.

“She was too sensible even to kindness, especially from those whom she honored. Her gratitude rushed forth as an overflowing stream, and could often find no utterance but in tears. The friends who visited her in her old age, and amidst her infirmities, especially her youthful friends, seemed to her ministering angels; and she would speak of their kindness to her with a brightness of counte-



nance not unworthy of an angel. I doubt not that her nature was singularly susceptible; but it was the character of Christ which brought out this fine nature, and which aided her, in narrow circumstances, with poor health, with an irritable constitution, and a diffidence singularly trembling and shrinking, to maintain to the last hour this strength of love, and to devote herself to labors so useful to mankind.

“I pass now to another friend, who this last week has been taken from us; and, though I am not accustomed to speak in this place of my deceased parishioners who have lived and died in private walks, I may be permitted to speak one word of Mrs. Catherine Codman. When I look round in this congregation, how few do I see of those among whom I was first established as a minister! And now that friend is gone by whom for so many years my labors have been cheered, and requited by an affection which could not have been surpassed. She, too, bore the impress of her Saviour. She, too, was filled with his spirit of love. Her benevolence had no bound. Its error was, that it was prone to overflow the limits which Providence had assigned. To the sick, suffering, and poor, she was as a mother and friend. Her wealth she regarded as a trust for the destitute, her life was a ministry of kindness and mercy.

“But perhaps the most beautiful view of her character was the fulness with which her affection and love flowed forth towards all the diversities of sect, party, and denomination in the Christian world. She was of no sect. Her personal friends, her intimate friends, were found among all denominations. Goodness, wherever and in whatever form it was manifested, was an attraction she could not resist, and much of the happiness of her life was found in the quick and strong sympathy with the spirit and virtue of Christ manifested in those who widely differed on the disputable points of theology: Clouds of human infirmity may have passed over her pure and benevolent spirit, but they could dim only for a moment the brightness of her Christian virtue. That was an enduring light, and I trust it is shining now in its true home with unquenchable splendor.”

“*Boston, November 11, 1832.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR, — I received your letter by Dr. Spurzheim last summer. I am sorry that I must send you so sad a reply. Last night he died. The event can hardly shock you more than it has done us. His death has spread a general sorrow. Perhaps it is to be ascribed in part to the interest he

<sup>1</sup> To William Rathbone, Esq.

awakened here. The kind reception which he and his lectures met with led him to overtask himself; he labored when he ought to have kept his room, and when at last he was confined, he unhappily chose to be his own physician, and refused to apply the remedies which his disease required. His disease was fever, which very soon produced wandering of mind. It must be consoling to his friends to know that he received every attention and enjoyed every accommodation. In truth, he could not have closed his days among a people more sensible of his worth. He had not only secured respect as a man of science, but endeared himself by his amiable manners, his philanthropy, and singleness of heart. The funeral discourse will be pronounced by his countryman, Dr. Follen, and the religious services are assigned to my friend, Dr. Tuckerman, in whom Dr. Spurzheim took great pleasure.

“Unfortunately, I saw little of your friend. On his arrival, I was at my country residence, where I became seriously ill. On my return to this city, four weeks ago, I had an interview with him as soon as I was strong enough to see him, and before I was able to repeat it he was too ill to visit me. The good man was taken away in the midst of his hopes. His success among us had led him to look on this country as the finest field for his labors, and he thought of devoting several years to the diffusion of his doctrines in the New World. When I speak of his success, I do not mean that he made many converts, but he found in many a disposition to inquire candidly into his system, whilst very many professed to receive important aid and instruction from his analysis and views of human nature. Our consolation under his loss is, that the world is not the only state for benevolent exertion.

“Your friend.”

“*Boston, January 7, 1834.* — has passed through the school of suffering, and his piety manifests itself in nothing more than in his entire submission to the will of God. He has helped you and your husband, I trust, to look up to that Infinite Being as your Father, and as the Father of your dear children. Yes, they were, and, still more, *are*, his children. Your love to them, deep, intense, as it was, he inspired. It came to you from the Fountain of all love, and it is but a faint image of the unbounded parental goodness with which he regarded and still regards your children. How much stronger must his interest in them be than yours! Can the creature's love approach the Creator's, — the stream equal the inexhaustible source? He gave these children to you, in kindness both to you and them, and in the same kindness he has taken them

away. They were born into this world to accomplish a great purpose, the unfolding of an immortal nature; they are born into another to accomplish it more fully. They have not lived in vain, though their lives were so short, nor is the care you have spent on them lost. The faculties which you helped to open endure, and will endure forever, and you must be grateful for having commenced a glorious work which is to go on forever. They are safe in the arms of a better Parent. Leave them there with holy trust.

“Let it be your care to carry on in yourself the work which is now advancing in them. They are making progress; so must you. This is the true way to unite yourself to them. Their best powers and affections are expanding, as you believe, under the care of God. Let yours expand too, for you are the object of the same care. You are to join them again, not by an ineffectual sorrow, but by a sorrow which shall soften and refine the heart, and which shall seek consolation in greater faithfulness to God and your fellow-creatures. I would that I could comfort you, my dear —; but I should rejoice still more, could I aid you in making affliction the instrument of a new virtue, of a firmer faith in Christ, of a deeper sympathy with your fellow-creatures, of a more efficient benevolence, and of a more confiding love of God. I pray God that you and your husband may derive precious fruits from suffering, — that you may enter with a holier resolution on the warfare against all evil in your hearts and lives, — that you may glow with the love of a higher, purer virtue. Our deepest misery is in ourselves, in our unfaithfulness to the inward monitor and to our Divine Teacher; and affliction is meant to reprove and purify. Let it do its work, and it will bind us to the departed more closely than when they lived.”

“*Newport, June 15, 1834.* I write you from the Island. A few warm days in Boston made me feel that I should be better here. The heat of other places withers me. Here it is blended with something reviving. I am alone. Some seasons of entire seclusion I think do us good, and though I do not seek them, I welcome them, when they come, as aids to Christian virtue.

“Solitude here naturally brings to my mind the changes I have passed through since I grew up on this island. Yesterday I went into town to see —, and *change* seemed written on all I saw. The old mansion where we used to meet my mother Gibbs’s smile and kindness in our childhood, and which the family parted with last year, was so transformed, that I could hardly believe it was the same house. I talked with — about grandfather and mother.



What lessons of frailty, separation, and death! These thoughts, however, produce in my mind no lasting depression. I feel that it is only the outward, the material, which is transitory, and that nothing good, lovely, pure, which I delighted in, has perished.

“I am struck, amidst these changes, with the continuance of the order and beauty of the natural world, and see in this a manifestation of the immutableness of God, and a pledge of the duration of that principle which is nobler than nature, the human soul. The island is now to me what it was half a century ago, only more beautiful. Years have only strengthened my enjoyment of the universe, and of this dear spot in the boundless creation; and this enjoyment is to me one sign that I was made to be an everlasting inhabitant of the universe. Such proofs of immortality are faint, indeed, in comparison with the flood of light shed on this great truth by Jesus Christ. Still, I delight to meet traces of it everywhere, to see it written on nature, and revealed in all the higher principles of the soul. This thought of an endless being, of ever enlarging knowledge and love, of never ceasing approach to God, of continually extending connections with his works and with the good and excellent,—how should it inspire and exalt us! I wish I could fix it more deeply and habitually in my mind. It does not interfere with our most common occupations and pleasures; for, to a reflecting mind, our whole being—including the past, present, and future—has a unity and most intimate dependence; and every right use of our powers, no matter how or where, is carrying us forward to our perfection.

“It is Sunday, a day which always favors such thoughts; but in the country, where it produces more than the usual stillness of rural life, and in my loneliness, you will not wonder that my mind rises to the pure, peaceful mansions which were brought near this day by the resurrection of Christ. There, I trust, dear L—, we shall meet, and be joined to the good who have gone before us.”

“*July*, 1836.<sup>1</sup> You say my letters have not pained you by praise. To me it requires more courage to praise than to reprove. The meanness of flattery is so great, that I am anxious to avoid not only the thing itself, but its appearance. A letter of compliment, which I feel to be due, is to me the most difficult composition. I often err in this respect. I know from my own experience that there are those who need the encouragement of praise. There are more than is thought, who feel the burden of human imperfec-

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

tion too sorely, who receive strength from approbation. I shrink from saying to these even all that I think. Happy they, who, from just confidence in right action, and from the habit of carrying out their convictions, need little foreign support!

“And now, my friend, must I say farewell? Am I to see and hear you no more? This I will not believe. If the steam navigation shall be established across the Atlantic, I may one day see England, and I shall delight to renew our intercourse. If not, we shall be joined, I hope, in spirit, joined in devotion to the same great cause of humanity, joined in sympathy with our race, joined in the uncompromising association of the great truths by which men are to be made free and regenerated, now and forever.

“May the best of Heaven’s blessings descend on you! May your aspirations after truth and goodness never cease to be more and more fulfilled! It will rejoice me to learn that your visit among us has increased your resources for wise and lofty action on other minds.

“When you can write to me from a prompting of your own spirit, do write. I shall be happy to learn that I have not faded from your memory and heart.

“Once more, my dear friend, farewell. May prosperous winds carry you to your loved home!

“Your sincere friend.”

“*July 29, 1836.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR FRIEND,—I thought I had spoken my last word to you on this side the Atlantic; but I have this moment received your letter, and must write a line of acknowledgment. I thank you for this expression of your heart. Without the least tendency to distrust, without the least dejection at the idea of neglect, with entire gratitude for my lot, I still feel that I have not the power which so many others have of awakening love, except in a very narrow circle. I knew that I enjoyed your esteem, but I expected to fade with my native land, not from your thoughts, but from your heart. Your letter satisfies me that I shall have one more *friend* in England. . . . I shall not feel far from you; for what a nearness is there in the consciousness of working in the same spirit! and then how near is our common home! Deep as my feeling of imperfection is, I do hope to meet the good in our Father’s house. In this hope let us work with him and for him, and for his children, for the poor and miserable, for the outwardly enslaved, and them that wear heavier chains within.

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

If it should ever seem to me that I can aid you in your work, be assured I will write. Farewell."

"*January 23, 1837.* We know how deeply you and yours are wounded by your late bereavement. The lovely boy was a centre to all your hearts, binding you all more closely together. Could affection have been a shield, he would still be with you. But he needed no shield. A greater love than yours watched over him, and has taken him away. Why he was taken in the dawn of his being, we cannot tell. The secrets of that world into which he has entered can alone explain it. Our world does not seem to have been intended for the education of all. To many it is only a birthplace. They are born to be translated, to receive their education elsewhere. Can we not trust our loving Father to choose the place where his children shall be trained? Is it not enough to know that they are in his hands? What! shall we with our faint love distrust Him who has inspired us with all the affection which we bear our children, and whose goodness is shadowed forth dimly by the strongest human love?

"We sometimes speak as if the child, dying so early, had accomplished no purpose; but we err. The child does much. How much has this little boy done for you all! How much warmth he has shed through your hearts! How many holy feelings he has awakened! How much happiness he has given! What a lovely image he has left behind! And what a new bond has he formed between you and the future world! Is all this nothing? Have we no cause to thank God for every pure being he has revealed and endeared to us? Let us weep for the departed, but let not the sense of loss make us forget how much has been given, and what a precious hope is left. So unwise and unthankful a grief would show that we needed it. If we have not faith enough to strengthen and comfort us under the loss of a friend, then it is time that the friend was taken. We have not learned wisdom from the gift. We need another school, that of its loss.

"Give my love to —. They must feel that this affliction has not come without its purpose. Death is a solemn teacher; but who of us can dispense with its lessons? What other teacher can so disenchant the world, so expand our views, give such convictions of immortality, so spiritualize our minds, so prostrate us with a sense of dependence and unworthiness before God? Such an event is an era in the history of parents, and it has often stamped a new character on the whole following life. I wish them every consolation, and, still more, I hope that they may find a blessed, sanctifying influence in affliction."



*“Boston, February 27, 1837. MY DEAR SIR, — I have this moment heard of the death of my dear, very dear friend, your daughter, and I cannot forbear writing to you immediately, to express my sympathy with you on this sad occasion, and my hope that you will be sustained under this severe trial. When I look back to the life and character of this dear friend, I see one of the loveliest exemplifications of the spirit of Christianity which it has been my happiness to meet. She was in the habit of opening her mind to me with great freedom, and I valued highly the privilege of access to a spirit so pure, so gentle, so overflowing with love, so strict in its demands on itself, so generous and indulgent to others. After her free communications, I felt how far she had outstripped me in the Christian faith. Her piety was singularly filial, though her delicate, sensitive nature was often pained by the consciousness of unworthiness. Her sympathy with Christian goodness and holiness, wherever manifested, was such as I have seldom witnessed. She truly loved Christ in all who bore his image. I can speak of her as I can of few others, for she spoke to me almost with the confidence of a child. I think of her now as a blessed saint; and were the heavens opened to me, and were I to see her among the just made perfect, I could hardly have a stronger confidence in her happiness than I have.*

*“My dear sir, you must labor to penetrate beyond the outward appearances and circumstances of death to her spirit. That was a region of light. How she loved you I well know. Her expressions of filial love were touching. To have had such a daughter is a blessing for which there cannot be too fervent gratitude. Will you express to your afflicted daughters my sincere sympathy?*

*“I remain, respectfully, your friend.”*

*“May 17, 1837.<sup>1</sup> I am not only cheered, but edified, by the sight of one so advanced in years, and so burdened with physical infirmity, yet enjoying so fully the powers and the pleasures of the intellect, so strong in faith, so calm, and bearing such practical testimony to the power of religion. It is my earnest desire that a life so happy and useful in its decline may be continued.*

*“With great respect, your friend.”*

*“Boston, November 9, 1837.<sup>2</sup> Age, retaining the freshness of youth, is one of the most interesting spectacles on earth. Within a few days I have lost a much revered friend, seventy-eight years old, who, after his seventieth year, wrote two valuable books on theology, and who, to the last, delighted in the study of nature, and entered into all*

<sup>1</sup> To Noah Worcester, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.

the great movements of the age with an earnestness distinguished from the fervor of youth only by greater calmness and a firmer trust. I never saw him without feeling that I had gained a wisdom which books could not teach. May you, my dear madam, continue to strengthen our hope of immortality by showing us how the spirit can retain its beauty in life, even to the moment when it is withdrawn from human intercourse.

“With great respect and sincere affection.”

“*August 24, 1838.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR, — I received, a few days ago, your last letter, written with a trembling hand; and whilst I was touched and gratified by this proof of your regard, I could not but regret that I had subjected you to so exhausting a labor. You must console yourself by thinking that you did good. I trust I shall be the better for this testimony to your principles, this breathing of your spirit, this expression of calm reliance on God’s perpetual inspiration and fatherly love. I hope it is not to be the last testimony. Should Providence renew in any measure your strength, you must give me a few lines, for you have not many friends more interested in you than myself. The conflicts of a mind, seeking, struggling for truth amidst peculiar obstructions, and sacrificing to it, not merely outward good, but friendship, confidence, love, are to me more affecting than all outward warfare. I trust you have received my late letter, written on hearing of your great debility, in which I begged you to forget, or not to think of answering, the preceding one. That will show you how little importance I attach to my criticisms on your communications to Mr. Ripley. I sometimes think of visiting England, and one of the great pleasures I have promised myself has been that of seeing you; but a higher will disposes of us, and who would reverse it? I thank God that he continues to you, amidst your trials, the strength of your faculties. So long as we can think clearly, we can carry on the great work of life, we can turn suffering to a glorious account, we can gather from triumphs over the body a new consciousness of the divinity of the spirit. I have sometimes thought that my gratitude to God was never more lively than in illness; and how many under this trial have had a new revelation of his presence! May he grant you these consolations! You feel, undoubtedly, as we all do on approaching our end here, as if you might have done more for the great cause to which your life had been devoted. To a friend of his race, who looks round on the amount of guilt and error in the world, how little he seems

<sup>1</sup> To J. Blanco White.

to have achieved! But let us thank God, if in anything we have served our brethren; and may we not say, in the disproportion of our desires to our doings, that we are destined to a higher efficiency, — to a world where our powers, now so imprisoned, will expand freely and joyfully? But I will not weary with reflections with which you are so familiar. I commend you affectionately to God, the never-failing Fountain of light, truth, peace, love, and blessedness.

“Very truly and respectfully, your friend.”

“*November, 1839.* You are wrong in thinking of peace as something which is to come only in the future life. There is no reason for expecting it hereafter but its having begun now. Every true surrender of selfish principles to God and the inward monitor is the beginning of heaven and heaven’s peace. The best proof of a heaven to come is its dawning within us now. We are blinded by common errors to the degree of celestial good which is to be found on earth. I do not tell you to labor for it; for a selfish impatience may remove it from us. I would say, accept your inward and outward trials as appointed by the Friend of your soul for its progress and perfection, and use them for this end, not doubtingly or impetuously, but confidently; and just as fast as the power of Christian virtue grows within you, peace and heaven will come, unless, for some greater good, present happiness be obstructed by physical causes. Be of good cheer. Be not weary in well-doing. Be not anxious.”

“*Boston, January 21, 1840.* Your faith has met unusual trials, and has not failed. I know few things which so darken our views of the moral government of God as the experience of baseness and treachery in people who have won our confidence. We are tempted to question the reality of human virtue, to suspect the hollowness of all appearances of truth and piety, and it is but a step to call in question the moral purpose for which we are placed on earth. But you have been saved from this rock; and in proportion as man has failed you, you have clung more earnestly to God. I have felt the power of this temptation. When I see how many of my race are debased, false, earthly, living without God, the question comes to me, ‘Is God indeed the friend and lover of all human souls, and is he working for their salvation?’ But I trust. One of the most blessed influences of Christianity is, that it assures us of the Divine grace towards the most fallen; and just as far as we can realize this, our love flows out towards the most guilty.

“You ask me for thoughts which may strengthen you. Your



experience of life and of God's goodness is a far better teacher than any suggestions of a fellow-being. The thought on which I delight to dwell, as I advance in life, is, that God is within me, — always present to my soul, to teach, to rebuke, to aid, to bless, — that he truly desires my salvation from all inward evils, that he is ever ready to give his spirit, that there is no part of my lot which may not carry me forward to perfection, and that outward things are of little or no moment, provided this great work of God goes on within. The body and the world vanish more and more, and the soul, the immortal principle, made to bear God's image, to partake of his truth, goodness, purity, and happiness, comes out to my consciousness more and more distinctly; and in feeling God's intimate presence with this, to enlighten, quicken, and save, I find strength, and hope, and peace. That Christians aim at too little, and hope too little from God and from their own souls, I feel more and more. Another reformation, I believe, is to come, though you and I may not live to see it."

"*Boston, April 13, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR, — I wrote to you some time ago, and, though I have received no answer, write again, as you have given me reason to think that a letter from a friend is some alleviation of your sufferings. . . .

"I sent you a discourse, which I hope you received, occasioned by the death of Dr. Follen. He was one of my dearest friends, and I cannot hope to replace him. Perhaps I have never known so true a friend of freedom, of the Right. He took part in the ill-advised revolutionary movements of Germany, — after Napoleon's fall, — occasioned by the refusal of the sovereigns to redeem their pledge of new constitutions to the people who had restored them. Though little more than twenty years old, his disinterestedness, courage, ability, placed him among the principal leaders. He was compelled to take refuge in Switzerland, where he was again and again demanded by the Holy Alliance. He at length found safety here, but not the reward due to his loyalty to freedom. In obedience to his highest convictions of duty he joined the Antislavery Society, which you know has been persecuted in the Free States, because of the irritation excited by it in the Slave States, and by this act made himself unpopular, and obstructed his success in life. We were not worthy of such a man. He lived, not prosperous, yet greatly blessed in domestic life, and cheered by his own magnanimous spirit, — and died to receive acknowledgments of his worth, which should have been granted in life. He suffered for his prin-

<sup>1</sup> To J. Blanco White.

ciples, and yet in his case I can see that virtue was its own great reward. . . . .

"I have written a long letter, not for an answer, but in the hope of administering a moment's pleasure.

"With sincere respect, your friend."

"*July 4, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> Your father is associated in my mind with the great movements of our times, with the struggles for civil and religious liberty and for a purer Christianity, and with the most important institutions for human improvement. I think of him as full of animation and hope, as alive to whatever touched the interests of his race, and as capable of great exertion. His family must be grateful that he was spared to them so long, and that Providence opened to him spheres of action so congenial with his holiest and best affections. The manner of his death gave, at first, a shock to us all; but may it not be the design of God, in surrounding those who are dear to us with outward painful circumstances, to drive us, as it were, to that which is inward, spiritual, endearing, over which waves and storms and the accidents of time and place have no power?"

"*July 21, 1840.*<sup>2</sup> MY DEAR SIR,—I was grateful to you for your letter of May, received a short time since, and yet I could not but regret that you had made a painful effort. I write you, not to lay you under the least obligation to reply, but because you have expressed an interest in my letters. I feel that you have a right to any alleviation of your sufferings I can give. Your experience differs from mine, for I have had little acute pain. I do not know that I ever suggested to you a fancy which has sometimes come into my head. I have thought that, by analyzing a pain, I have been able to find an element of pleasure in it. I have thought, too, that by looking a pain fully in the face and comprehending it, I have diminished its intensity. Distinct perception, instead of aggravating, decreases evil. This I have found when reading accounts of terrible accidents, which have, at first, made me shudder. By taking them to pieces, and conceiving each part distinctly, I have been able to think of them calmly, and to feel that I, too, could pass through them. Sympathy increases by the process, but not fear. The sympathy weakens the personal fear; but this is not the whole explanation. The soul, by resisting the first shudder, and by placing itself near the terrible through an act of the will, puts forth energies which reveal it to itself, and make it conscious of something within, mightier than suffering. The

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Carpenter.

<sup>2</sup> To J. Blanco White.

power of distinct knowledge in giving courage, I have never seen insisted on, and yet it is a part of my experience. The unknown, the vague, the dark, what imagination invests with infinity, — this terrifies; and the remark applies not to physical evils, but to all others.

“ You speak in your letter of the relief you have found in music. Have you met with a very curious book, ‘The Correspondence of Goethe with a Child’? Her name was Bettina. I fell in with the work on a journey, and ran through it, omitting a good deal. It interested me as a psychologist, for it gives quite a new specimen of mind. A good deal in it relates to music, much of which I could not understand, and much of which sounded like extravagance, — but I felt that there was a truth at bottom, and I wanted to understand more. I am no musician, and want a good ear, and yet I am conscious of a power in music which I want words to describe. It touches chords, reaches depths in the soul, which lie beyond all other influences, — extends my consciousness, and has sometimes given me a pleasure which I may have found in nothing else. Nothing in my experience is more mysterious, more inexplicable. An instinct has always led men to transfer it to heaven, and I suspect the Christian, under its power, has often attained to a singular consciousness of his immortality. Facts of this nature make me feel what an infinite mystery our nature is, and how little our books of science reveal it to us.

“ I was gratified in reading, in the *Christian Teacher*, an article on the *Midsummer Night's Dream* from your pen. You there speak of *Don Quixote*. That work has never produced its full effect on me, on account of my deep interest in the hero, which makes me indignant at the contumelious treatment he receives. I sympathize with and venerate the knight too much to laugh at him, and wish to join him in discomfiting his assailants. Was the author aware of his work at the moment of beginning it? His first delineation of *Quixote* is that of a madman; you are not at all prepared for his loftiness of mind. Did not *Cervantes* start with the first conception, and lay out the adventures of his hero in correspondence with it? Did not the nobler conception steal on him afterwards? Whether this suggestion has been made, I do not know; but the parts do not cohere in my mind. I love the *Don* too much to enjoy his history.

“ I still hope to hear that you have found relief. As I have told you, it gives me much pleasure to hear from you; but you must write only when you can find some pleasure in the exercise.

“ With respect, your sincere friend.”



“*Boston, June 20, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> MY DEAR SIR, — Your letter of May 24, just received, has given me pain, though it was expected. Your previous letter had prepared me to hear of Mr. White’s departure. I ought not to feel pain at an event which has terminated such severe sufferings, and converted his faith into fruition. But we cannot dismiss a friend from our home, much more from the world, without some sadness. I confess I have a feeling of disappointment at this event. I have for years cherished the hope of seeing Mr. White. When I have thought of crossing the ocean, the pleasure of intercourse with him has risen to my mind, among the chief I should find in England. Perhaps there was not a man in your country whom I wanted so much to see. I felt that no mind could open to me so interesting and instructive a history. I know by experience some of the conflicts of spirit through which he passed, and I longed to put a thousand questions to him about the processes through which he arrived at this and another conviction. I venerated the rare heroism with which he sought truth. But he is gone, and I am to know him only in another world. The account you give me of his trust and patience has done me good. I am little moved by passionate piety in death; but how grand is the entire submission of so calm, reflecting a man, in such deep suffering! My own trust seems to have gained strength. I rejoice that he has committed his manuscripts to *you*, for you understand him better than anybody. I shall wait impatiently for his autobiography. I besought him again and again to leave some record of his inward history; and I expect from it singular benefits. Not that I shall agree with him in all his speculations: I differed from him a good deal; but I do not know that I ever read anything from his pen which I did not find instructive. He understood the controversy between Romanism and Protestantism as few do. Very few of us get to the heart of this quarrel. Most Protestants fight Romanism under its own standard.

“I have sometimes observed on the beach, which I am in the habit of visiting, a solemn, unceasing undertone, quite distinct from the dashings of the separate, successive waves; and so, in certain minds, I observe a deep undertone of truth, even when they express particular views which seem to me discordant or false. I had always this feeling about Mr. White. I could not always agree with him, but I felt that he never lost his grasp of the greatest truths.

“I sympathize sincerely with you in your loss. How much have you lost! The daily privilege of communion with a great and good

<sup>1</sup> To the Rev. J. H. Thom.

mind is a daily light shed over our path. I know something of your affliction, for in the short space of two years God has taken from me two friends, Dr. Follen and Dr. Tuckerman, who were knit to me in true Christian brotherhood. But we will not say we have lost such friends. They live within us in sweet and tender remembrances. They live around us in the fruits of their holy labors. They live above us, and call us, in the tones of a friendship which Heaven has refined, to strengthen our union with them by sharing their progress in truth and virtue. I shall write a line to Mrs. Rathbone, to whom I feel myself a debtor, for her kindness to our common friend. When you have leisure, I shall be glad to know more particularly what writings Mr. White left.

“Very sincerely, your friend.”

“*June 21, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> You gave me great comfort by your account of Mr. White. Perhaps you hardly knew how dear he was to me. I had never seen him, but the imagination and heart had woven a tie as strong as real intercourse produces. I read, many years ago, Mr. White’s letters on Spain, and when I was told that the inward history of a Catholic priest, given in that book, had been drawn in part from the author’s experience, I felt a strong interest in him, and the sentiment has received strength in his successive writings, from accounts of his friends, and especially from his correspondence. I wished to see him, perhaps, more than any man in your country. The struggles of his mind for truth, which were continued for so many years, the vast tracts of opinion over which he had passed, and the infinite variety of thought and emotion which his experience must have embraced, made me look on him as a man who had crowded many lives into one, or who had traversed all lands and seas, and been driven by all their storms, who had enjoyed or suffered all climates, and, after his long, perilous voyage, had found a quiet haven. I felt that he could answer questions which no other man could. Then the reports brought me of his sweet, mild spirit, which had withstood a life of controversy, shed over him a peculiar moral beauty. His writings, too, had prepared me to expect a rich, fresh intellect. He always rose to my mind when I thought of a visit to your country, and now he has vanished, and it is well that he has gone.

“I rejoice to think that he found such a shelter in his last hours. All England, I am sure, could not have furnished him a more loving home to live and die in, more faithful friends, more Christian sympathy. *He* was privileged, and so were *you*. To minister to

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. William Rathbone.

the last sufferings of a good great man, to witness the triumph of faith, patience, love, over the last agonies, to be looked on with affection by the dying whom we revere, to feel that we have formed a close, tender union with an immortal spirit, — these are privileges indeed. Were I authorized, I would thank you, your husband, your children, for your offices of love to our departed friend.

“The passage which he dictated to you for me showed the vigor and originality of his intellect. I prize it as a testimony of personal regard, as well as for its own sake.”

“What strangely various forms love takes! In most people, affection is a chief ground of faith in immortality. The loss of friends carries them into the future world. Love cannot let the departed go. It clings to them in a better world, seizes on every proof of that world, and sighs for reunion. Some of my Jewish friends, of singularly strong affections, speak of their departed as of their living friends, and seem to have no more doubts of their blessedness than of their own existence. But in you affection takes the form of anxiety and fear, just as some tender parents think only of the perils of children who are separated from them. I cannot enter into your state of mind, for my own experience has been wholly different.

“My faith in immortality rests very little on mere affection, but very much on the *fact* of human excellence. The sight of eminent virtue carries me up to heaven at once. Indeed, virtue and heaven are very much one in my sight. It seems to me as natural for virtue to *live* as for the animal to breathe, and much more. Virtue is the only thing in the universe of the continuance of which I am sure, for it is of the very essence of God. Everything else may pass away; this cannot.”

“*Newport, June 27, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> There is presumption in attempting to explain particular dispensations of God. He is to be judged by his vast universal laws, not by this or that fact. We sometimes, however, seem to catch glimpses of particular fitness in a trial to the sufferer. . . . Perhaps the greatness of mental suffering is of itself proof of its being needed. A nature capable of suffering is capable of proportionate doing, while at the same time this nature may carry within itself obstructions to its high destiny.

“I am, however, less and less disposed to undertake the interpretation of particular events. I have been reading Nichol’s *Architecture of the Heavens*, which you named to me, and it has filled me with adoration, humility, and hope. It reveals a stupendousness

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. E. L. Follen.



in God's works, a silent, slow, solemn unfolding of his purposes, before which I bow in a kindred silence. I cease to wonder that six thousand years have not done more for the race, when I see so clearly that a thousand years are but a day to the Eternal. The connections of human life stretch before us, and are lost in the endless ages which are needed to accomplish God's designs. And yet I do not feel myself sinking into insignificance under the weight of these thoughts. I am amazed by the grandeur of the human spirit, which out of a few signs detected by the telescope can construct the universe. My joy and reverence assure me that this universe is my school and everlasting home. . . .

"Since I saw you, I have made a long visit to Philadelphia and New York, and I return with an unchilled faith, I trust with a brighter hope. Everywhere there are spirits kindled by great thoughts, by generous sympathies. The mass, indeed, are of the world; but the good are of a higher order than formerly. This is the grand, cheering fact. Tremendous evils are to be contended with; but there are men and women who can look them in the face and not fear, who have within them a consciousness of something mightier than all the evil. How it refreshes me to meet with a strong, hopeful soul! . . .

"I am glad you are approaching the end of your interesting, holy task. Be not troubled at the thought of the book passing into unworthy hands. Remember the Great Teacher knew that his seed was to be sown on rocks, and among thorns; still he rejoiced to scatter it, for some was to fall on the good and honest heart. Besides, the seed on the rock is not always lost. It finds, sometimes, a little chasm into which to strike its root. Let us not distrust. Let us not despise even the worldly. They have in them all that we have, sometimes more; and who knows but that your book is to reach the unknown divinity within them?"

"*August 2, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> In regard to the evils of life, they trouble me less and less. I see pain and death everywhere. All animated nature suffers and dies. Life begins and ends in pain. Then pain has a great work to do. Then there is a vast good before us, to outweigh and annihilate it. Its universality reconciles me to it. I do not ask to be exempted from the common lot. In this, as in all things, I wish to go with my race. I pretend not to explain events, but I do see glorious issues of suffering, and these are enough. Once, had I been called upon to create the earth, I should have done as the many would now,—I should have laid it out in

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. E. L. Follen.

pleasure-grounds, and given man Milton's occupation of tending flowers, &c., &c. But I am now satisfied with this wild earth, its awful mountains and depths, steeps and torrents. I am not sorry to learn that God's end is a virtue far higher than I should have prescribed."

"*Boston, December 21, 1841.*<sup>1</sup> I became a subscriber to the Antislavery Standard soon after I learned that it had passed into your hands, and perhaps the occasion will allow me to express the strong interest I take in you and your labors. You have suffered much for a great cause; but you have not suffered without the sympathy, respect, and affection of some, I hope not a few, whose feelings have not been expressed. Among these I may number myself. I now regret, that, when you were so near me, I saw so little of you. I know that you have higher supports and consolations than the sympathy of your fellow-creatures, nor do I offer mine because I attach any great value to it; but it is a relief to my own mind to thank you for what you have done for the oppressed, and to express the pleasure, I hope profit, which I have received from the various efforts of your mind.

"I have been delighted to see in your 'Letters' in the Standard such sure marks of a fresh, living, hopeful spirit, — to see that the flow of genial, noble feeling has been in no degree checked by the outward discouragements of life. The world's frowns can do us little harm, if they do not blight our spirits; and we are under obligations to all who teach us, not in words, but in life, that there is an inward power which can withstand all the adverse forces of the world. With the best wishes for your health and success, I remain your sincere friend."

"*March 12, 1842.*<sup>2</sup> MY DEAR FRIEND, — You see I reciprocate your 'familiar and affectionate phrase'; and I do it heartily. There are, indeed, few people whom I address in this way, for I fear to use language stronger than my feelings; and I shrink so much from the appearance of flattering words, that I not seldom smother affections which struggle for utterance. But I grow freer as I grow older. Age has no freezing influence, and the inward fountain gushes out more naturally. To *you* I ought to open my heart, after what you have told me of the good which a loving, cheering word does you. I confess I had thought of you as raised more than most of us above the need of sympathy. I had heard so often of your brave endurance of adversity, and was conscious of having suffered so little myself for truth and humanity, that I

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. L. M. Child.

<sup>2</sup> To the same.

almost questioned my right to send you encouraging words, and certainly did not expect so affectionate a response. I thank you for your gratitude. It shows me that I can do more than I believed by expressions of esteem and admiration. If I can lift up and strengthen such a spirit, how can I keep silence?"

"*Lenox, August 18, 1842.* I would not make you 'of the world,' if I could, that you might escape all dissatisfaction with things as they are, and might plunge unrepiningly into the current which is hurrying on the multitude they know not where. Never lose your faith in the high purpose of your being, in man's infinite destiny. But I desire to carry your faith farther. I wish you to confide in the wisdom and goodness of that Providence which has seen fit to connect the spirit with the body, to place the heir of heaven for a time on earth, to subject us to necessities, toils, outward cares, and numberless details, and which has ordained these as a part of the processes by which we may be carried forward and upward. To you the outward world and the inward are in hostility. Believe that they may be made friends. Believe that persevering effort in a vocation, that the exercise of judgment and invention, and the practice of forbearance and kindness, in common affairs, may be so united with the highest speculation, so hallowed by pure aims, that they may bring about a more complete and harmonious development of your nature than what you would call a purely spiritual mode of life. We are to bend circumstances, common relations, to our great end, and it may be done. . . . To become interested in men, we must act with them from pure motives, must mix with them, now to co-operate with, now to resist them. You need not fear. You will find courage and strength, if you will commit yourself to a good course. We should all shrink from our vocation, could we at the beginning foresee the difficulties in our path. But trial brings strength. Unexpected resources spring up by the side of unexpected obstacles."

"*Lenox, August, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> Our letters have informed us of the removal of your venerated mother. We feel that the change was a blessing; that it was time for the weary traveller to rest,—for the discipline of life, so unusually protracted, to end,—for the spirit to leave the body which had so long hung on it as a weight. What a change is death to one who has approached it through extreme old age! How hard it is to conceive of a friend, on whom the furrows have been deepening and the head whitening for so many years, laying aside all debility, all the infirmities of age, and

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. George Lee.



entering a new existence of perpetual health, freshness, and, may we not say, youth! I remember, when my grandfather died, at about ninety-four years old, the thought darted through my mind, 'How shall I know him without that gray head, those deep lines of time on his countenance?' These seemed to enter almost into his identity. Yet our new senses will recognize our old friends with a quickness little comprehended now. To you this event, so much to be desired, is an affliction, a bereavement. How peculiar the relation of a mother! She was our first friend, and from the hour of our birth, amidst all life's changes, and the inconstancy of other loves, that faithful, tender heart never forsook us, to its last throb. A parent's love is the best type of the immutableness of the Divine."

"*Lenox, August, 1842.* I am as well as usual, and enjoy what I call health, the more for its interruption. You speak of yourself as an 'automaton.' It is thus that the heart rests after painful excitement and deep sorrow. It is well for us that none of our emotions can retain uninterrupted vividness, and, especially, that the more vehement exhaust themselves. By this kind provision we are saved from being absorbed in a particular feeling, from shutting up the soul in a particular event. Our whole nature is brought into action. A false, sad notion has injured many, that we owe it to departed friends to die to those who remain, to die to our race, to feed on dark pictures of life, to reject the blessings which our kind Father has strewed in our path, because some have been taken from us. It ought to be the influence of bereavement, of the vanishing of loved ones from our sight, to give us more reverent and quickening conceptions of the spiritual nature of the undying soul, of that vast futurity through which our faculties and affections are to expand into a divine life and felicity; and under this hope, we should desire to enter on a nobler field of action now. The departed have gone to see, to love, and serve the Infinite Father with a new fervor and elevation of spirit, and we should strive to sympathize with them, to be joined with them by participation of their progress. We are apt to feel as if nothing we could do on earth bears a relation to what the good are doing in a higher world; but it is not so. Heaven and earth are not so far apart. Every disinterested act, every sacrifice to duty, every exertion for the good of 'one of the least of Christ's brethren,' every new insight into God's works, every new impulse given to the love of truth and goodness, associates us with the departed, brings us nearer to them, and is as truly heavenly as if we were acting, not on earth, but in heaven. These are common truths, but we do

not feel them. The spiritual tie between us and the departed is not felt as it should be. Our union with them daily grows stronger, if we daily make progress in what they are growing in."

"I am never surprised to hear of misgivings, doubts, or self-distrust, the great trial of life to many; and at the same time, one of the grand signs of our destiny is, that our conception of virtue, holiness, outstrips our powers of immediate attainment. The very improvement of our moral sense becomes a source of fear; our very progress in goodness, by opening new spheres of duty, may sometimes discourage us. Humility always grows with virtue, with increasing knowledge of God. I have but one great trial of life, and that is, the disproportion between my idea of duty and my practice. Our fear from this source is in part unreasonable. Our idea of the perfect, the holy, is not to be our standard of self-judgment any farther than we have power to realize it. Perfection is revealed to us, not to torture us from our falling short of it, but to be a kindling, imposing object, to be seized by faith as our certain destiny, if we are faithful to the light and strength now given.

"We are not to repine or fear, because in our childhood we want maturity of wisdom or strength, — but we are to be animated by the thought of what we may become. Still, after making all allowances, we must suffer from self-rebuke. Our own hearts often condemn us. Our pure, spiritual resolves, how often they fail us! But we must never despair. The consciousness of error is encouraging, — it shows a measure of moral life in us.

"Self-rebuke is God's voice, his call to new effort, his promise of aid. It is to me a most sustaining idea, that I am always guarded by God, and shall receive more and more aid in proportion as I am receptive of it. When the sight or voice of a friend stirs up my spirit, when nature touches and elevates my heart, when a word from some inspired author reaches the depth of my moral nature, when disappointment corrects and purifies my views of life, &c., — on all these occasions, I feel that God speaks to me. I see in them pledges of his earnest parental desire for my redemption. I see in them the workings of Omnipotence for my good, the breathings of his spirit, confirmation of its precious promises, that heavenly aid is most freely given to human weakness. I am strong only in my consciousness of union with God."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. George Lee. .

## CHAPTER VII. — HOME LIFE.

AND now let us enter the home circle, and look upon the daily life of a man thus aspiring to oneness with God by reception of his influence and co-operation with his plans, thus longing for full illumination, thus universal in humanity, thus earnest for the emancipation of every brother, thus firm while liberal in justice, thus generous, compassionate, elate with hope, unchangingly faithful. In the following letter to his sister, Dr. Channing manifests the affectionateness which was the undertone of his harmonious character.

“As I advance in years, though I form new ties and am enlarging my interests in others, I turn to my early, and especially my domestic, friends with increasing tenderness. I find more to love in those I have longest known. This is a good sign. In truth, when I look on my own family, and make them a standard of the race, I feel that the accounts of human depravity must be exaggerated.”

In the spring of every year, exhausted by his winter's work, and pierced by the raw east winds of the Massachusetts seaboard, Dr. Channing found himself compelled to revisit Rhode Island. In April, he writes to a friend: —

“This season is one in which I always lose strength, and am obliged to give up for a time my common duties. As soon as the warmth of the weather will admit, I shall retreat to the country, and there give myself three or four months' repose, that I may be prepared for a new campaign.”

Another languid month has gone, and then he can thus pour out his grateful satisfaction in the sense of returning health and spirits: —

“I write you from our dear native island, — a spot which becomes more and more dear to me. Whilst the generation with which I grew up has disappeared, nature is the same; and even when a boy, it seems to me that my chief interest clung to the fields, the ocean, the beach. What I want at this season of the year is repose, and I know no part of our country which has more of tranquil beauty than this.”

And again: —

“*August, 1832.*<sup>1</sup> I am spending this, as I do all my summers, about sixty or seventy miles from Boston, on my native island,

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.



called Rhode Island, a spot of which I suppose you have never heard, but which is to me the most interesting on earth. I believe it is universally acknowledged to be the most beautiful place on our whole range of sea-coast. It has one of the finest harbors in the world, and is situated in a broad bay, which embosoms many islands, of which this is the queen. Its surface reminds me more of the gentle, graceful slopes of your country, than any scene I have visited in America; and its climate is more English, being quite humid, though affording us often those bright skies of which you see so few in England. No spot in our country which I know has so equal a temperature. These advantages, together with fine beaches for bathing, make it quite a resort for invalids and the fashionable.

“My residence is in the very centre of this beautiful island, five miles from the town; and when I tell you that a son of your Gilpin, the celebrated writer on the picturesque, gave us some hints towards laying out our garden, and that it has been cultivated by Scotch and Irish gardeners, you will easily conceive that, though we are so remote from you, our outward world does not greatly differ. In natural beauty, my island does not seem to me inferior to the Isle of Wight. In cultivation, it will bear no comparison. Our farmers are slovenly, spreading their labor over large farms, satisfied to live well, and caring little for posterity or for improvement. Here I spend four or five months annually, enjoying my tranquillity almost too much, almost reproaching myself for being so happy, when I am doing so little for the happiness of others.”

It was extreme refinement of conscience only that could have made Dr. Channing feel even a transient pang of self-reproach for these periods of involuntary retirement. The alternative each year was death or long repose. The thought constantly suggested by intimate acquaintance with him was, “How is the frail body of this man kept living by his desire to finish his work!” The finest fibre only united the spiritual force and the material frame, and he felt no liberty to snap the tie till his mission was discharged. Duty governed him in the care of health as in all relations. Feeling that early imprudence had made him an invalid, he husbanded conscientiously his scanty store of strength, though every year compelled to pay in weeks and months of inaction the penalty for exertions beyond his power, but which he felt no freedom to forego. The robust might have thought him a valetudinarian; but close observers could not but revere the touching patience and quiet resolution with which he daily, hourly, sacrificed desire to judgment, and curbed an aspiring, bounding temper to keep a gentle pace.

Critics have blamed him that he left no large finished works. But they who were near him felt shamed by an energy that, amidst such constant hindrances, accomplished so much. It is only by incidental allusions scattered along his correspondence for years, that one can form an adequate conception of the clog which hung upon him throughout his manhood. But justice to the noble spirit, who so uncomplainingly bore the load of mortality, demands that this fact of his unremitted physical depression should be fully understood. A few extracts from his letters will show the nature of his malady, and the gentle firmness with which he wore his fetters.

“*July, 1825.* The pulse, habitually languid, begins to fly under the exertion of preaching, and fever and increased indigestion follow.”

“*Brookline, September 16, 1825.* Last night I found my usual sleep restored to me, which I esteem a great blessing. The tranquillity of the mind by day is certainly aided by its repose at night, and could I bring back the slumbers of childhood, I should not despair of getting something of a childlike lightness of spirit in my waking hours.”

“*November, 1825.* I resume my public labors, though not without some cause of apprehension. The effect of my interesting engagements is to take away sleep almost wholly for nights. This has been one of the symptoms of my failing health.”

“*October, 1827.* I have borne so long the burden of that half-health, which makes a man unable to say whether he is sick or well, and which restrains all the soarings and continued efforts of the mind, that I earnestly desire some release from it.”

1828. “My health continues to form no small part of the discipline to which Providence sees fit to subject me. I have bright days in which I form plans of extensive exertion, and perhaps my very ardor suddenly reduces me to a state of debility in which I hardly dare to expect ever again to accomplish anything.”

“*St. Croix, April 6, 1831.* I believe I must make up my mind to carry with me this feeble body to the grave. Sometimes, when I am obliged to stop in the midst of an interesting subject, I wish I had more health. But if we are to live forever, we need not be impatient. That word *forever!* Does it never break upon you with something of the power of sudden thunder, and startle you into a strange awe? O how wonderful that immortality does not move us more!”

“ *October, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> I have experienced during this depression of the body, what I have sometimes known before, a singular clearness and brightness of mind on the most interesting subjects. Without the least enthusiasm, or indulgence of imagination, I have thought of human immortality with a calm elevation and happiness which I think cannot be common. There was a jealousy and dread of a dreamy, visionary state of mind, and a deep consciousness that all emotions in view of futurity which could not be brought to mingle with and bear on common life were useless. The physiologists tell us, that, in cases of this kind, the nervous system, or whatever part of the body ministers to thought, is under some peculiar excitement. May it not be, that, in this depression of the animal life, the mind is more free from the influence of matter, is more itself, and gives us some earnest of what it is to be? One thing, however, I learn. If a change of the present animal system can give us such glimpses and enjoyments, what may we not hope from the spiritual body, the more refined organization of which Paul speaks?”

“ *December 28, 1833.* In truth, I have not, for a long time, had such health. I dare not draw upon it largely, and spend much of the day in exercise. Still, my progress, though turned to so little account, is a great good to me. To be able to move without a consciousness of effort in every step, and to study a little without entire exhaustion, is so much of a novelty, that I enjoy it more than the healthy do their perfect strength.”

“ *Philadelphia, May 27, 1835.* At this moment I am somewhat worn down by preaching two sermons two successive Sundays. There seemed a call for effort, and I do not regret that I made it; but I must suffer.”

“ *Boston, May, 1838.* I have been taken from my labors for nearly two months, and am good for little, though slowly rising. I look forward to my retreat on the island with increased joy. In that quiet, I can use my powers with less injury than amidst the excitements of the city.”

1841. “The tract has been better received by the public than I had reason to expect, for I wrote under great languor, with a continual consciousness of inability to give sufficient force and expression to my thoughts. This is a cross I have often to bear, and yet some of my productions, which have been wrung from me by painful effort in hours of feebleness, have done good. My three

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.



Lectures for the Laboring Classes were written with the feeling of a feeble man carrying a load up hill; and yet I have testimonies from the mechanics of England to their usefulness."

Pains have been taken thus to exhibit Dr. Channing's constant feebleness of body, because, unless his physical condition is conceived, his character cannot be rightly apprehended. His seemingly inactive life was not a chosen, but an imposed, form of existence. Essentially, he was a person of strong will, keenly sensitive, large in affection, earnest in purpose, brave, though prudent, and indomitable in cheerful trust. Fluent in enthusiasm, guided on by a bright ideal, sympathizing profoundly with his race in their trials and struggles, refreshed in faith from on high, he was designed, apparently, to have poured abroad a river of good influence in varied action. But the accidents of birth in an age of unsettled opinions, and still more of a shattered constitution, diverted his energies into a broad, deep lake of contemplation. Regarding his life as a whole, and considering how he was hemmed in at once by speculative difficulties and bodily infirmity, it is indeed remarkable that he should have so identified himself with his fellow-men in all lands and conditions, and have made his power so widely felt. But to no one as to himself did his success seem partial; for he measured it by his grand designs. He knew only, that, under his circumstances, he had done his best, and humbly deferred to the ever-widening future the accomplishment of his hopes. This view of Dr. Channing is so interesting and instructive, that it may be well to illustrate its truth by quite full extracts from his correspondence. In nothing did his real greatness shine forth more purely than in his submission to the necessity of a comparatively passive life.

"*Boston, June 28, 1824.* Yesterday I preached without sparing myself, letting a great subject bear me where it would, and the exhaustion was only temporary. Can it be that I am to be spared to accomplish some of the labors on which I have set my heart?"

"*November 12, 1824.* Yesterday I delivered a short sermon without suffering. This I esteem among the very happy events of my life. It is true that infirmity and inaction, when appointed by God, are to be received as good, and I am persuaded that some of us are more deeply instructed in heavenly wisdom by being laid aside as useless, than by being left to successful and honored labors; but when our Master recalls us to his work, is it not right to rejoice?"

"*October 10, 1825.* I have resolved on any sacrifice but that of duty, which health may require. I have hope that I may do some-

thing ; but my thirst for study and exertion, which sometimes rises to a passion, must be indulged very moderately, if at all. It is all right, however. The Great Disposer knows our whole nature, and looks through our whole duration. I doubt not, that, if the present trial yields its proper fruits, I shall be ultimately a wiser and more efficient being than if I were to follow my own course now."

" *November, 1825.* Repose, repose, is becoming almost too favorite a word with me. It is to me food and medicine. I do not mean inaction, but a calm exercise of my powers and affections. The affections are about as exhausting as the intellect, and a little more so when strongly excited. I trust that I am not only to gain wisdom in this respect, but to put it in practice. I fear that a less animated mode of preaching may be less impressive. But the question is, if continued labor of a less impressive kind may not do more good than a few efforts, destroying the power of exertion, and followed by long intervals of relaxation. You see I am grown rational."

" *Rhode Island, August 17, 1827.*<sup>1</sup> I almost envy you the happiness of continued activity, and of such exertions as show their fruits. Most of us hope we do good ; but we live by faith rather than by sight. Now and then we have affecting proof that what seemed to us lost seed has struck root, and that our words have found their way far into men's minds. You, from the nature of the materials you work upon, — to say nothing of your mode of working, — see striking changes. . . .

"I am still at this paradise, — for such Rhode Island is to me. I mean paradise externally, rather than internally. I do not find refuge here from the great conflict of human nature, from the war of 'the spirit against the flesh.' But to some minds quiet retreat brings advantages for that struggle. The Divine principle within us seems to be called forth by the marks of the Divinity in the creation, and the religion of meditation — not the highest religion, indeed, but still not worthless — is nourished. I am aware that a virtue which leans so much on outward condition is not to be compared with that which wins its crown on the field of battle, and grows stronger by exposure. But we must make our way as we can ; and I trust that a temporary shelter does not disgrace a soldier of Jesus Christ. The effect of the quiet thought to which I give myself here is to make me more sensible to the thick darkness which overspreads the Christian world. I seem to discover as many errors in practical as in dogmatic religion. The false theology,

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

which has prevailed for ages, is burying us still in night. But the corruptions which we are trying to expose in the popular system are perhaps but superficial, compared with those which remain unrecognized, and which we all inherit. The true reformation, I apprehend, is yet to come. But enough."

"*St. Croix, February 12, 1831.*<sup>1</sup> Hardly a day passes without spreading and strengthening my sympathies with the mass of men, the poor, the forsaken. The sights which are most familiar here turn my thoughts continually on the need of great revolutions in our present social order. The selfish, all-grasping spirit, which everywhere sacrifices the many to the few, or leaves the many to suffer without pity, or the means of improving their lot, must be resisted as it has not been.

"You are right in not being willing to exchange your daily walks for my luxuries and ease, though I was half angry and half amused at the manner in which you speak of my present situation. You seem to think I am acting the part of Corydon; but I never had any great relish for Arcadia. Man's business is among men; and if I have gone to solitudes, it was not to sigh among shades, but to use my little power as well as I could. To me the country is the best article in the *materia medica*. Its quiet is to me what sleep is to you. In society, I soon become exhausted. Earnest conversation makes me fevered, and so does breathing the close air of a heated, crowded room. I am obliged, too, to live more at home from the necessity of observing a regimen. . . . To one who finds so many little trials in society which he can hardly speak of, it is well to walk in a quiet, retired path. I have never found that my lonely way of life has alienated me from my race. On the contrary, I think that, to me, it has been the spring or nutriment of philanthropy. It has kept me from factitious tastes, and from attaching importance to the artificial distinctions of life. . . .

"You will ask me, I know, what I do in my retirement. I wish I could give a better report. I am not idle, but my mind is not in one of its productive moods. I am following out some great views. Do not smile or scold because I am only *accumulating*. Suppose I leave the world before communicating more. Think you that in the future world there will be no room for what we now learn? A mind which is toiling in solitude, if it gain truth, is preparing itself for larger reception of truth hereafter, and will be perpetually exalted and useful."

"*February, 1834.*<sup>2</sup> In truth, who can sympathize with an intel-

<sup>1</sup> To Joseph Tuckerman, D. D.

<sup>2</sup> To Orville Dewey, D. D.



lectual laborer, disappointed in his dearest hopes, as I can? . . . . Unhappily, the care of the body does not allow any systematic exertion of mind; and yet I do not complain. To myself, the mind seems to be making progress. I trust this is not one of the delusions of age. I am hardly old enough to be cheated in this particular."

"*June 6, 1835.* I made a great effort at Philadelphia, and preached three Sundays in succession, which I have not done for a long time. The people were anxious to hear, and I willing to take the hazard of unusual exertion; and, though I was much exhausted, I believe I did not suffer essentially. On these occasions I long for greater strength. Knowing, as I do, that I have great and life-giving truths to deliver, I want to toil as I have never done. I can tell you from my own experience, that a good constitution is the best estate; and you must do what you can to earn it. However, it is a comfort to know, that, where there is a fervent heart and a strong purpose, much may be done with a weak body."

"*Oakland, June 22, 1840.*<sup>1</sup> I have long learned to estimate life by the capacity of action it affords. To me there has been but one serious drawback on the enjoyments of a very privileged lot, and that has been the inability to work without an almost constant feeling of exhaustion; the inability to realize, as yet, any of my great purposes. When I see one who can work with spirit and joy, I could almost envy him; and yet I have never questioned that Providence which has laid on me my burden."

"*January 1, 1842.*<sup>2</sup> Since I wrote to you, I have had an illness, from which I have been creeping up slowly these two months. My suffering was nothing, compared with yours. Still, I take pleasure in remembering what a privilege it seemed to me to live, to think, to feel, to lift up my heart under much pain. It seems you cannot continue writing; but this will not make life useless. There is often a mysterious growth of the mind, which we can trace to no particular efforts or studies, which we can hardly define, though we are conscious of it. We understand ourselves and the past, and our friends and the world better. I have sometimes been tempted to think that the most profitable portions of my life were those when I seemed to do the least. There is a certain *maturity* of mind, distinct from acquisitions of knowledge, which is worth all the fruits of study, and which comes we hardly know how. Perhaps I give an individual experience; but I state it because it has helped to reconcile me to inaction."

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

<sup>2</sup> To the same.

“*Lenox, July 13, 1842.* I like much the Transcendental tendencies of our family. I do not wish that we were more like the world. At the same time I wish we may be *working* men, bringing something to pass, lovers of our race not in word and feeling only, but in act, and useful in the plain, homely walks of life, whilst we soar into higher regions. To unite noble speculation with wise and noble action, this is the idea of a great and good man; let us try to realize it. The old adage, that sails profit nothing without ballast, we must remember. Unhappily, some are all ballast, and go to the bottom; some of us are all sails, and run adrift.”

“*Lenox, August, 1842.* You are in danger of suffering from high aims. Because they are not to be accomplished instantly, because the power of doing the whole work of life is not unfolded at once, you droop. You shrink from the toil and conflict by which this power is to be won. I understand what you mean by want of energy, for I have felt it all my life. The difficulty in both of us is physical, to a great degree. I hardly know what it is to do anything without a sense of exhaustion. The light, buoyant spirit with which many men do their work, I have experienced just enough to make me comprehend it, and to be conscious of my want of it. What then? I have felt it a privilege to work, even under exhaustion; and power has grown by such work.”

The expression used in one of the preceding letters, — “the religion of meditation, — not the highest religion indeed, but still not worthless,” — gives us the clue to Dr. Channing’s life. Cut off from the large range of study and action, which in early years had opened such glorious prospects, he meekly turned his powers upon the inward toils of self-purification. If not in this life, then in another would he, Heaven willing, be prepared for the widest services of love. In a letter to Dr. Tuckerman, he says with affecting humility: —

“*June 17, 1828.* I am now at my pleasant retreat, hoping for strength to do something, but not anxious. I feel that religion is obscured by much error, and I would do what I can in the cause of reformation. But a deep feeling of deficiency and unworthiness checks the hope that God will employ me for the communication of any great light. It is something, however, to see the darkness, and to awaken others to seek a better future.”

Calmly, trustfully, he consecrated himself to attain perfection, with an enthusiasm that grew more intense, the more it was concentrated. Neither restless nor sluggish, unanticipating, yet watchful, he trained himself to faultless practice of the scale of

moral harmony, and serenity kept his faculties in tune. In the following words he but describes his own experience.

“There is a thirst for something better. This is the first step. The next is far harder, — I mean the resolution to make the sacrifices which progress demands. There is an immense space between desire and self-denial.”

He obeyed in its strict sense the law, “Renounce and be blessed,” and enjoyed in fullest measure the liberty of self-command.

A remarkable person, in a state of mystic illumination, while passing penetrating judgments on a number of distinguished men, once said of Dr. Channing, that “he was kept from the highest goodness by his love of rectitude.” Very probably he would himself have verified the correctness of this criticism. There certainly had been periods of life when he had restrained himself, as he was aware, too stiffly, though every year of maturing virtue rendered him more free. But in his company the thought would constantly occur, “How much richer is the latent nature of this man than the manifestations of it which he allows to appear, or than he is himself aware of!” An earnestness, a susceptibility to profound emotion, an exuberance of sanguine cheerfulness, a chivalrous daring, a stern yet smiling heroism, a poetic glow, flashed out at times through his guarded evenness of deportment, giving promise of a higher style of greatness than that which he revealed. And yet, when one beheld his composed consistency, his attempered strength, most self-relying when least outwardly sustained, his presence of mind and foresight, his calm contentment, and, above all, his steady growth, the question rose, whether his energy of will and wisdom were not most displayed in this willingness to wait. Too early buds are blighted. His summer had not come. Seemingly he had sacrificed impulse to method, fulness of force to order; but had he not thereby attained to peace, “that highest and most strenuous action of the soul, in which all the powers and affections are blended in beautiful proportion, and sustain and perfect one another”?<sup>1</sup>

It was Dr. Channing’s desire and purpose to write a book on the growth of a religious spirit, in which, in a partly biographical, partly didactic form, he would have illustrated his own experience in regard to the true function of conscience. He had discovered that the monarchical principle in human nature becomes despotic, when not checked by the representative element of the natural

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. I. p. 205. One Volume Edition, p. 574.



affections, and the constitutional law of enlightened reason. He had learned thoroughly the benefits of moral gymnastics in solitary self-discipline ; but he had learned also that the useful exertion of all faculties combined, in pursuit of worthy ends amidst our fellows, is the highest training for symmetric goodness. A few hints from his private papers will show this tendency of his thoughts in later years.

“ The idea of improvement, progress, perfection, must become plain, palpable, all-animating. It must inspire and quicken our desires. The whole force of the soul must be reserved for Love. This idea of celestial virtue, lofty, venerable, must fix the purpose of universal goodness, and sustain the firm resistance to all sin. The consciousness of being appointed for this sublime end is to give a tone to the whole mind, to protect us from the debasing influences of selfishness, to communicate worth and beauty to the humblest duties, to kindle and elevate all our affections, to surround us with a sense of the charm, dignity, glory, of life, to lift us up, to carry us forward. We must devote the whole body of sin to death, and choose perfect goodness as our supreme end. The promotion of that virtue which is central and universal, that is, love in its purest form, secures most full and rapid advancement, and mingles joy with every effort of self-control and of progress. The passions are never so easily subdued as when checked by a generous, disinterested, sublime purpose, with which the soul is filled.”

“ There is a mystery in the growth of the spirit, as of the body ; and if we supply the needed nutriment, the process in each goes on without our consciousness. The moral nature is fed by right action amidst present duties, rather than by direct efforts put forth on the character. Improvement is less promoted by constant self-watching, than by a generous pouring forth of our minds and hearts on grand objects. Great men are produced by great ends. There is a danger of selfish sensitiveness to our own imperfections. The best remedy for habitual self-indulgence is to plunge ourselves unreservedly into some work of well-doing which involves hardships and demands self-sacrifice. We improve without intending, without knowing it, by mere intercourse with great minds. Perhaps direct effort is chiefly important as preparing us for these more gently pervading influences. The best growth is that which we do not rigidly determine. Accordingly, there is to be a wise abandonment of ourselves to good influences. We must not too anxiously seek self-formation. This may prevent free, natural development. There may be nervousness about spiritual, as well as physical health, a killing of our strength of will by medicines, a want of

trust in wholesome aliment, air, exercise, and light. Nature, society, events, beautiful examples, all carry forward the mind open to good impressions. A latent consciousness of their benefits makes our surrender to their charm an act of virtue. We grow wise every moment without intending it, if our hearts are set upon perfection, as taste grows in the artist by communion with beautiful objects. A purpose may guide us without perpetual thought of it. We must put forth our full energy, we must seek a right direction of all our powers. But the great means of improvement is to prepare ourselves for the celestial light forever shed abroad, for deeper insight into virtues, wherever manifested, for higher aspirations, however suggested, for the inward monitions which carry us onward, for inspirations, for Divine impulses."

"Reverie," said Dr. Channing to a friend, "was once the hectic of my soul, — meditation has been its life." In these constrained seasons of rest and retirement, when he was seeking to put away every motive, association, habit, that obscured with earthly fumes the firmament of the spirit, when amid inaction he was training himself to energy, resolution, self-sacrifice, courage, and in solitude was longing to extend and multiply his ties of spiritual intercourse with mankind, he was brought ever nearer and nearer to the living God. His trains of meditation, like ascending and descending angels, linked earth with heaven. Without mysticism, rapture, or any form of extravagant emotion, he felt that he was daily walking in closest intimacy with "a Being worthy of the heart's whole treasure of love, to whom he might consecrate his whole existence, in approaching whom we enter an atmosphere of purity and brightness, in sympathizing with whom we cherish only noble sentiments, in devoting ourselves to whom we espouse great and enduring interests, in whose character we find the spring of an ever-enlarging philanthropy, and by attachment to whom all our other attachments are hallowed, protected, and supplied with tender and sublime consolations under bereavement and blighted hope."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Channing's private papers, as well as his published writings, are so pervaded by piety, that to select particular illustrations seems like attempting to condense from a single flower the ray that calls out its tints and perfume, while the earth and air are radiant with sunshine. Yet the picture of his life would be imperfect without giving one or two extracts as indications of this central trait of his character. It may be said, in a word, however, that with him devoutness was no fitful, intermitted state, a sudden summer be-

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. I. p. 204. One Volume Edition, p. 573.

tween polar nights of apathy ; his thoughts and deeds, conversation and social pleasures, as well as his solitary hours, were made perennially fruitful by a glowing consciousness of the Divine presence.

“ I must be alive to God ; I must feel the infinitely near connection that binds the spirit to the Heavenly Father. I must thirst for him, as the Perfect Goodness, — as the centre, fulness, fountain, of all that is great and lovely. The explanation of the habitual insensibility to God, in which multitudes live, is, that the state of mind into which they are forced by the present condition of mankind is hostile to the religious feeling. Amidst prevalent selfishness, we do not feel the *generosity* of the Divine love. But we can even now gain glimpses of the Perfection of which the law of right is the essence. God is the Infinite Moral Will, — pure, unmixed Goodness, — pure Reason and Love, abiding in the peace of calm, unchanging, eternal rectitude. We are to enter into the depths of his love to every living creature. To conceive vaguely of goodness is not enough. The Divine love is the love of a God, infinite love, infinite in its energy, intenseness, variety, extent, duration, its all-vivifying, all-recreating power. This love embraces, pervades, every being. It is universal, impartial, immutable. Does not such a love imply that every spirit is to be unfolded everlastingly? Should not every intelligent being be looked upon with infinite faith? Are we not surrounded by manifestations of the unlimited disinterestedness of God, which should fill our hearts with gratitude and devotedness? Let every being remind us of perfect good, of the interminable, glorious future, in which the light of the Divine love is to be shed abroad forever more brightly throughout the universe. We can never form even a faint conception of the Heavenly Father, until we rise to the idea of perfect goodness as the fountain of a love that pours forth forever rich, free, unbounded communications of its own blessedness, that warms, embraces, quickens, exalts all creatures. God is the ever-living, ever-animating centre of this glorious universe, from which we cannot in thought for a moment separate him. To strive towards this Sovereign Moral Will, to commune with him, is our highest good, our supreme end, our immortal life.”

“ Is the all-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ the manifestation of Divine goodness most suited to move us, most within reach of our hearts? Is it by living in this, and conforming ourselves to this in daily life, that the glory of the All-loving Father most fully beams on us? Is sympathy with this love of Christ a revelation of God to our hearts? Is it through a like sacrifice that the true sense of the All-Good is to be unfolded within us? We must have



the faith of Jesus in the *divinity* of duty. This spiritual act of faith, carried out in the performance of duty, will open to us a heavenly glory in goodness. God's *will* must be trusted and obeyed; then does he come forth to us, manifest himself to us. Do we love him by feeling his presence, or feel his presence by loving him? The love of God must be sought from love, from a conscious union with him, that thirsts for its own increase. His goodness calls us to goodness, to all that is lovely, generous, great, self-sacrificing; and goodness exercised creates new capacities for goodness; we grow by beneficence. God hides himself from us, that our love to him may be moral, rather than instinctive, selfish, personal. He reveals himself as the inspirer of conscience, as the fulness and fountain of virtue; and he cannot be loved, except as virtue, goodness, moral perfection, is loved. Is not the very spirit of piety the devotion of the soul to moral good? Our Father, the Father in whom Christ dwelt, is not so much to be thought of as the Creator acting abroad, but as acting within, the life of our spirits, the awakener of love. In the immensity of the universe, and its countless, endless blessings, we are to see emblems of his spiritual interest in his spiritual children. All his perfections bring him into nearest union with every soul. Moral consciousness only can help us to comprehend the infinite interest of the Father in every individual spirit, his desire for its unbounded glory, progress, felicity. His love can be conceived of only when we feel that the soul by its moral endowments is fitted to bear God's image in goodness, and to ascend for ever and ever in immortal love."

"To see God, to know him, is not to see anything outward, but to recognize him as a spirit in all his acts, as the designer in all his designs, in every thing and event to perceive the present, living energy of the Heavenly Father. The universality, infinity, impartiality, perfect justice, perfect love of God is to be acknowledged throughout all processes of nature and humanity. He is Light; we are to behold his bright revelation of himself in his use of all creatures. It is by viewing all things as coming from the spirit of God, that we are to learn his boundless knowledge and inexhaustible love. The infinite connections which unite all creatures are the sign of God's all-pervading energy. The animalcule lives by the operation of infinite laws. Until we combine all finite particulars in the idea of the infinite unity, — until we look at the design of the Heavenly Father, in the whole creation, to awaken the infinite principle in man, to train up his spiritual children to immortal goodness, — until we see in all his laws a welcome summons to universal, disinterested love, — we cannot know God. To see God in the

universe is to see in it the unity of one infinite thought, purpose, spirit, pervading it, — a glory of goodness brighter than all suns, — a harmony of power more majestic than all the combined forces of creation, — a happiness richer than all means of happiness, — a love which in itself is joy. To know God, we must consider his great end, which is to unite all beings by universal justice and love, — to bring all spirits into harmony by moral bonds, — to reconcile all that is partial, narrow, selfish, separate, — to make all spirits one by love.”

“Prayer gives intensity to the consciousness of our connection with God, — lifts us out of our narrowness into communion with the Infinite, — teaches us to regard our interests as embraced within the immense designs of Providence, — opens to us a view of our relations to the universe and all spirits. We come to Him who has the well-being of all creatures in his control, in whom the whole good of the universe is concentrated. Can we approach him absorbed in selfish wants? We come to the Spiritual Father, who desires our perfection, whose law of rectitude is immutable, whose will of goodness is supreme, who abhors evil. Must not every desire become purified in such a presence? God always regards us in our connections with other beings; every gift bestowed upon us, or withheld from us, will affect them as well as us. Should not our petition be, then, to receive only what the Universal Father sees to be best for all as for ourselves? The true spirit of prayer is a submission of ourselves to the good of the whole, to the purposes of Infinite Love.”

These fragments, from manuscripts which might fill volumes, must suffice here to show how truly — to use his own words — Dr. Channing had attained, “in the universal action of the soul, to conscious harmony with God and the creation, an alliance of love with all beings, a sympathy with all that is pure and happy, a surrender of every separate will and interest, a participation of the spirit and life of the universe, an entire concord of purpose with the Infinite Original.”<sup>1</sup> It was from the centre of all-creating, all-redeeming, all-sanctifying goodness, that he sought habitually to regard events and persons. He longed to be made wise with the science of Divine order in its progressive developments. He trained himself to be, in the highest sense of the word, *just*, to escape from partiality and prejudice into the open air of truth, to see the relative worth of objects and occasions, to measure accidents by principles, to divine the future from the confluent tendencies of the past, to

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. I. p. 205. One Volume Edition, p. 574.

watch the ongoings of Providence. Through the still hours of his meditative summers, in untiring contemplation, he passed in review men and measures at home and abroad; and from the consciousness of his own failures and triumphs, learned patience and hope for his race.

In this effort to become "a follower of God, like a dear child," Dr. Channing found constant refreshment in communion with natural beauty. His letters overflow with allusions like these to his delight in outward scenes:—

"I have been walking amidst our trees and flowers, admiring the perfection of God's works, and seeing his glory in all that he has made. O could his rational offspring fulfil their purpose and reach their perfection, as do these humbler productions of his wisdom and love! But are we to despair? The plant is short-lived and not free. Can we expect a free, immortal being to develop himself as early and regularly as the material, finite germ?"

"I am now enjoying the great luxury of my life, — quiet in the midst of nature. I am debarred by my health from many of the pleasures of life, but this is a balance for all. It grows dearer the older I grow, and I am old enough to know the value of a happiness over which time has no power. Here I feel my own spiritual nature, feel myself one with the universe. I suppose there is no great virtue in the sentiments of love to God and to man which spring up almost involuntarily in such scenes. But they help to reveal us to ourselves, and are prophecies which concur wonderfully with the promises of Christianity."

"I sometimes think that I have a peculiar enjoyment of a fine atmosphere. It is to me a spiritual pleasure, rather than physical, and seems to me not unworthy our future existence. Did you ever read the life of that noble Platonist, Henry More? He seemed to consider the breathing of the air on him as something *more* than an emblem of the Holy Spirit; and I can understand how he was led to associate with it some peculiar influence from above."

"You hope much aid to your intellect from the beautiful prospect your new house is to give you. Do not be too confident. The intellect, in the common sense of the word, may be less aided than the imagination and the heart. I am now spending the summer in the country, and I find myself lured perpetually from my books and papers to saunter among the shrubbery, to listen to the wind among the branches, to eye flowers whose names I cannot remember, to let the affections rise or expand at will. I begin to think there is more wisdom in these affections than in much that people call phi-



losophy ; but perhaps you have not lived long enough to learn this, and may blame your beautiful prospect for troubling the intellect."

"I hope you enjoy this beautiful September as much as I do. What a blessing such a day as this is ! So much a creature of the senses am I still, that I find on such a morning that it is easier to hope in God, and to anticipate a boundless good for my race."

"You want to hear our news, but the best and happiest life is that which gives nothing to speak of. My life is more and more inward, and this cannot be thrown into the shape of news. How can I convey to you the music of the trees this moment in my ear, made by a fresh south wind after a shower last night ? And yet this is one of my events. Do you understand me, when I say that this solid earth and all that it contains seem to me more and more evanescent, at the very moment that they reveal to me the Everlasting ?"

"I hope you carry your spirituality into nature, that you feel the sacredness of nature, that you see in it the infinity of its Author, that its vast laws expand and elevate you, that you recognize in these the expressions of the highest truth."

"The return of spring is more interesting and touching to me than in former years. I certainly do not love nature less, but more, as the time approaches for leaving it. Is not this a sign that I shall not leave it, that I am preparing to enjoy it in higher forms ?"

Thus inwardly and outwardly at peace, life continually opened before Dr. Channing more rich in beauty. He surprised one by his expansiveness. Each year, in look, movement, tone, manner, he seemed younger. His interests grew fresher and more varied ; his sympathies more quick and pliant. He learned to trust good impulses, threw the reins loose on the necks of his tamed affections, and allowed himself freer enjoyment. By increasing purity and harmony, he became ever more at home in the universe. This bright youthfulness of spirit thus manifests itself : —

"*March 5, 1826.* To me the season has been a golden one, for I have been able to work a little, to preach more than I have done for years, and to resume partially my old habits of application. I ought to say, that I find life a gift increasing in value. I have not found it a cup foaming and sparkling at the top, and growing vapid as I have drunk. In truth, I dislike altogether this old-fashioned simile. Life is not a little cup dipped from the stream of time. It is itself a *stream* ; and though at its birth it may dance and send

forth cheerful murmurs as it does not afterwards, still it is intended to flow, as it advances, through more beautiful regions, and to adorn its shores with richer verdure and more abundant harvests. Do not say that this end is frustrated. I do believe there are multitudes who have not found infancy and youth as happy as later years."

"*Oakland, September, 1828.* I look back on my summer with much pleasure. To me it has been a bright one. I have seldom had my powers more at command; and the health and cheerfulness of my family, and the enjoyments of solitude on the sea-shore or in the fields have given almost a perpetual succession of agreeable emotions. I welcome and am grateful for such pleasures; perhaps the more because I do not look forward to them. I live as in the midst of death, expecting to stay here but a short time, and knowing that suffering may fill up this short space. There is not quite the joy of surprise, but something unexpected, in this calm and blessed flow of life."

"*Oakland, June 29, 1834.* Our cup runneth over. Life is truly a blessing to us. Could I but see others as happy, what a world this would be! But it is a good world, notwithstanding the darkness hanging over it. The longer I live, the more I see the light breaking through the clouds. I am sure the sun is above them."

"*Boston, November 16, 1834.* My children are growing so fast, that they are constant remembrancers to me of my having made progress towards another world; and yet I cannot feel old. It is by reason, not sensation, that I am reminded of my age. I never felt less like leaving the world, and yet I cannot continue long. Happily, the future opens on me still more brightly. Immortality seems to me yet more real; and, whilst I have much to attach me here, I desire a better life. Without being discouraged as to the prospects of society, I feel that neither of us can hope to see so much of heaven on earth, as to make us wish to live always here. What infinite thanks we owe to Him who has brought life and immortality to light!"

"*Boston, 1837.* There are clouds not a few in our sky. But I have lived too long to be surprised, or to repine at this. It seems to me that existence continues to be an increasing good, — that the longer I live, the more I enjoy; and I incline to believe that this is better than a life of unvaried gratification would have been. The spring is just opening upon us, and this season has long awakened in me most delightful sensations. I sometimes look around and

feel as if the mere privilege of viewing the heavens and the earth were enough to constitute existence a blessing."

"*Oakland*, 1839. Indeed, life has been an improving gift from my youth; and one reason I believe to be, that my youth was not a happy one. I look back to no bright dawn of life which gradually 'faded into common day.' The light which I now live in rose at a later period. A rigid domestic discipline, sanctioned by the times, gloomy views of religion, the selfish passions, collisions with companions perhaps worse than myself,—these, and other things, darkened my boyhood. Then came altered circumstances, dependence, unwise and excessive labors for independence, and the symptoms of the weakness and disease which have followed me through life. Amidst this darkness, it pleased God that the light should rise. The work of spiritual regeneration, the discovery of the supreme good, of the great and glorious end of life, aspirations after truth and virtue, which are pledges and beginnings of immortality, the consciousness of something divine within me, then began, faintly indeed, and through many struggles and sufferings have gone on.

"Since beginning this letter, I have visited a beach, the favorite haunt of my boyhood. There I saw the same unchanged beauty and grandeur which moved my youthful soul; but I could look back only to be conscious of beholding them now with a deeper, purer joy. So much for what would be called an unhappy youth! Perhaps I owe to it much of my present happiness. I know not that in indulgence, prosperity, and buoyant health, I should have heeded the inward revelations or engaged in the inward conflicts to which I owe so much."

"*Oakland*, 1839. There is a pleasure in the consciousness of progress, however slow. To see something growing under our hands is a solace, even in great weakness. During this summer, I have been able to give little more than an hour a day to my work; but I have been all the happier for my pains.

"I love life, perhaps, too much; perhaps I cling to it too strongly for a Christian and a philosopher. I welcome every new day with new gratitude. I almost wonder at myself, when I think of the pleasure which the dawn gives me, after having witnessed it so many years. This blessed light of heaven, how dear it is to me! and this earth which I have trodden so long, with what affection I look on it! I have but a moment ago cast my eyes on the lawn in front of my house, and the sight of it, gemmed with dew and heightening by its brilliancy the shadows of the trees which fall



upon it, awakened emotions more vivid, perhaps, than I experienced in youth. I do not like the ancients calling the earth *mother*. She is so fresh, youthful, living, and rejoicing! I do, indeed, anticipate a more glorious world than this; but still my first familiar home is very precious to me, nor can I think of leaving its sun and sky, and fields and ocean, without regret. My interest, not in outward nature only, but in human nature, in its destinies, in the progress of science, in the struggles of freedom and religion, has increased up to this moment, and I am now in my sixtieth year."

"*Oakland, September, 1840.* I am growing old, as I hear, though I cannot acknowledge it to myself. But I have so little time to spend on earth, that I wish to see more of my friends. I should rejoice to leave recollections which will cheer them, and which especially will aid them to prepare for the close of their own journey."

"*June, 1841.* We old folks seem to have the advantage of the young. We can enjoy with less excitement. I find, too, a great increase of satisfaction, as I advance, in the clearer sight of things which time and reflection have brought. In my earlier years, I see that I walked in a mist. Shall we make this discovery perpetually as we ascend?"

"*Oakland, July 31, 1841.* I incline to visit new scenes. As we grow old, we must resist the chains of habit. Peace be with you. Live daily, constantly, with a high purpose, putting forth moral energy in the minute conflicts of desire with the sense of right. This is the way to keep our spiritual weapons bright and strong."

"*Boston, December, 1841.* My cheerfulness is of that quiet, uniform character which makes no show on paper. It does not depend on good stories, queer speeches, laughable incidents; nor is it made up of flashes, but shines gently, steadily."

"*January 1, 1842.* I wish you a happy new year, and many, many such. I say *many*, for I trust life is to be to you what it has been to me, an improving gift. Youth is not its happiest period; at least, it ought not to be."

But it was not for his own sake only, and for the peaceful spiritual discipline which he there enjoyed, that Dr. Channing prized so highly his summers at Oakland. The consciousness of youthful freshness inspired from natural beauty made him anxious to secure for his children the opportunity of passing as large a portion of the year as possible in the country. He felt that he had owed so much, from boyhood onward, to the silent teachings of the

universe, that he could not bear to see the young spirits intrusted to his charge cooped up in the brick prisons of our overgrown cities. Fidelity to private relations was thus a strong motive for his periods of retirement. He was a most devoted and loving father, and an ever-wakeful spirit of duty watched over and guarded his parental affections. Almost at the close of life he wrote : —

“The more we recede from childhood, the more our hearts are drawn back to it by tender remembrances, by the contrast of its beauty and joyousness with what we see of later years, and by our increased knowledge of the solemnity and grandeur of that existence on which the little creatures are entering so unconsciously. I am a parent, but I sometimes feel as if the affection which springs from *thought* were stronger than that of instinct.”

Extracts from his letters will best enable us to understand his relations to his children, and his views of their education.

“*Portsmouth, R. I., July 10, 1824.* I have not forgotten the cordial pressure of your hand the night before I left Boston, when I told you I had heard of my family on their way home, and was to join them the next day ; and now that they are round me, and my heart is overflowing with a quiet joy, I feel as if I should find some relief and a new delight in talking to one whose sympathy is so dear to me.

“Both the children have one sign of health, which I hope is a sure one, — an exuberant, irrepressible animation. It seems to be one purpose of infancy, that it should be a fountain of spirits and exhilaration for the drooping and care-worn travellers of adult life. If anything in life makes me wonder, it is the immense difference produced by a few years between the child and the man. I cannot, by any effort, revive the feelings of my infant mind. The holiday life of my children strikes me as a mystery. When I see the slightest excitement stirring up the living principle in them so powerfully, when I see the flexible, graceful form, so instinct with spirit, and the countenance so beaming, so lighted up with joys and hopes as transient and swift-winged as they are absorbing, I see a mode of existence so different from my own, that it perplexes as much as it delights me. Perhaps I do not enjoy it the less for comprehending it so little. I see a simple joy, which I can trace to no earthly source, and which appears to come fresh from heaven. It seems to me, I could never have been so happy as my children are. I feel as if so bright an infancy, though not distinctly recollected, would still offer to memory a track of light, as if some vernal airs from

that early paradise would give vague ideas of a different existence from the present.

“When I see my children living without end or aim, and living so happily, I almost distrust that laborious wisdom on which we adults plume ourselves. Does not the Christian become a child, in the sense of acquiring the lightness of spirit, the freedom from anxiety, which belongs to infancy, — the child owing it to temperament and ignorance, the Christian to a strong faith, — the child casting its little burdens on a human, the Christian his greater ones on a heavenly parent? I wonder, too, if the good man, as he advances in truth and goodness, does not revert to the guileless simplicity, the quick commerce between the soul, the countenance, and the voice, which belongs to infancy, — whether he does not find that the reserve, caution, policy, prudence, to which men look for success, are shallow expedients, the offspring of a purblind wisdom, and that the ingenuous exposure of a pure and disinterested mind is the surest way to all noble ends which was ever discovered. Dear —, what a letter! You will think me half as much a child as those I have written about. I have spoken of the joyousness of our first years as poets do of spring, — forgetting that, with the flowers and balmy gales, there are chilly winds and days of gloom. But *you* will not be an unkind critic, especially when you remember that I have exchanged the stillness of a deserted house for the gay sounds and affectionate faces which now surround me.”

1824. “Our connection with children was meant to be a happy one, and for that end a confiding spirit is necessary. It is unavoidable, at their age, that they should fall into a great many errors, and that, under the influence of strong, absorbing impressions, they should seem to lose the good ones which we have made. But the very volatility that troubles us should give comfort; for these new and threatening impressions will soon in turn resign their place to others, and we must wait in hope for the propitious moment of renewing and deepening those which seem to have passed away.”

1824. “As to the period of beginning religious instruction, much must depend on the capacity of the child; and I have the general impression, that much more is to be done towards developing the religious character by awakening feelings, and forming habits congenial with piety, than by making this the subject of direct inculcation. Filial affection and gratitude, general kindness, and the sense of duty, are excellent preparatives for religion, and may be called into exercise before any just ideas of God can be given.”



1824. "I incline more and more to the use of generous motives, and of appeals to the best feelings in children. We must call out in them the sense of honor. I believe that the seeds of generosity may early be sown, and that the sensibility to what is good and great may early be awakened. When you look back into very early life, do you not discover the traces and dawns of some truly exalted sentiments?"

1825. "For their sakes we must educate ourselves. Do not let us forget that the habitual state of mind and feeling which we express before them will do more, vastly more, than any direct instruction, to form their character. Let us strive, then, to give to our own sentiments and motives the elevation which we wish our children to possess."

1825. "Sometimes I think that the clouds are lifted a little from the subject of education. We know too little of the *perfection* of the human being, and of his manifold nature, to judge very clearly of the means to that great end. But we must feel that our nature has a better guide and wiser protector than ourselves. We must follow our light, be it more or less, confiding to a higher power, and new gleams will break upon us. The defects of our short-sightedness will be more than supplied by Omniscience. Here I anchor my soul. I feel myself more and more lost in the immensity of God's system, — more ignorant, blind, helpless; but I do not despair. There is infinite intelligence watching over one and all, an intelligence which has decreed to make us all partakers of itself, if we are true to the incipient light which now dawns upon us, and which will be in the place of our own wisdom, wherever the narrowness of our faculties forbids our self-direction."

1826. "I am inclined to prefer very much the *oral* method of instruction, if I may so call it. Could we use books less and talking more, one of the chief objects in early teaching would be attained more certainly, — I mean *distinctness of conception*. I attach as much importance to this as Mrs. Hamilton, and, in truth, her views on the first steps of intellectual development agree with my own, perhaps, more than any I have seen."

1826. "Nothing but *time* can give us a feeling of security as to the character of the young. We begin, perhaps, with ascribing a kind of omnipotence to education, and think that we can turn out a human mind, such as we wish it, almost as surely as a mechanic can turn out from his machinery a good piece of work. But we learn, as we grow older, that the human mind is more complex and delicate in nature, and especially more independent and self-active, than

we had imagined. Free-will, that glory and peril of a rational being, belongs to the child as truly as to the man ; and the child must be the chief agent in the production of its own virtue, and it has power to resist all influences. This is right. It is well that no mind is put into the hands of another to be moulded at pleasure."

1828. "I believe much in giving the young the elements of every science or branch of knowledge. I have never learnt anything which has not been useful to me, and I often groan over the deficiencies of my education. — would probably slight the physical sciences, and give himself to moral ones and to general literature. But physical science is of great value. I lament that I cannot keep pace with the discoveries of the age. The universe is a divine volume, and I wish I could look on it with a more intelligent eye. Were I able to be a student, I should devote regularly a part of my life to the pursuit of natural science."

1829. "I dislike boarding-schools as much as you can ; but I wish my children to mix freely with those of their own age ; nor have I many fears, whilst they come home, after every talk or play abroad, and lay open to us the impressions they have received. I believe we must try children a great deal. When I see amidst what infinite influences, impulses, trials, vicissitudes, we are all plunged by our all-wise Parent, I feel that by an anxious caution, such as I sometimes see, I should fail to act in his spirit, and to co-operate with his providence."

1835.<sup>1</sup> "Remember that it is the distinction of a man to govern himself, and that a man who cannot keep to his resolutions and pursue his course of study or action firmly and steadily must take a low place in the world, and, what is worse, in his own esteem.

"I beseech you in every temptation to be true, honest, frank, upright. Whatever you may suffer, speak the truth. Be worthy of the entire confidence of your associates. Consider what is right as what *must* be done. It is not necessary that you should keep your property, or even your life, but it is *necessary* that you should hold fast your integrity.

"Enter on the school with the firm purpose of obeying *all* the laws. Do nothing which you need to hide. Make it a matter of honor and principle to do nothing which can injure the institution of which you are a member. Breathe no spirit of disaffection into your associates. Be the friend of good order. If at any time you think yourself aggrieved by your teachers, go to them frankly, and urge your complaints calmly and respectfully.

<sup>1</sup> To his son.

“Treat your companions generously and honestly ; sympathize with them, and seek their good-will as far as your principles will admit. But never sacrifice these. Never be laughed out of your virtue. Take your ground openly, manfully, and you will at length command respect. Do not let your companions depress your ideas of right. They cannot do you a greater injury.

“Reverence God, love him, and live as in his presence. Every morning you will be remembered in our prayers. Every morning remember us in yours. At that hour, let us meet at the mercy-seat of our common Father.”

These extracts show the blended firmness and freedom, cordiality and dignity, with which Dr. Channing treated his children. He sought to gain their confidence by perfect honor and truth in all their intercourse. He taught them self-respect and courtesy, by the respectfulness and sweetness of his own manner. Strictly trained in his own early years, he had experienced the benefit of inflexible justice. His children saw that they must not dispute his positive commands, nor question his mature decisions. But the affectionateness of his look and tone, the familiarity to which he welcomed them, his disinterestedness and elevation above arbitrary caprice, gave a charm to his authority, and inspired a trust in his care and counsel, like reliance upon Providence. If in any case he found — which rarely happened, so deliberate was he — that his discipline had been injudicious, he would frankly tell his children that he had been unjust. He encouraged them to open their hearts, allowed full liberty in the expression of opinions, unfolded his own views, invited and listened to their objections, taught them to think. In a word, he made them his companions, and sought to win their unreserved friendship.

Dr. Channing's attachment to the young, indeed, was very strong, and continually deepening. In walking in Boston, one of his greatest pleasures was to pass among the crowds of children in the Mall, and to watch their bright looks and bounding movements. And in the summer he always endeavored to surround his children with a group of young friends. In a letter he says, “Our days are very bright and happy ; the house is filled with children ; and the more of good children, the better.” He mingled in their scenes of merriment with cordial delight, contributed to every innocent sport, was inexhaustibly ingenious in inventing entertainment, and received them, on their return from rambles and pleasure excursions, with a quick response to their joy, that seemed to rival their own buoyancy of spirit. As years passed on, and the children who, summer by summer, visited Oakland, became youths and



maidens, he read with them, made them companions of his walks, passed hours with them in animated conversation, became as far as possible their confidential adviser, discussed character, manners, private interests, and public affairs, and sought to raise them up to high-toned honor, purity, and benignant gentleness. A little child, during one of these visits, threw herself into the arms of an elder friend, and, smiling through her tears, exclaimed, "O, this is heaven!" so did she feel subdued by the atmosphere of love which he diffused. And a young girl wrote: "He welcomed me with a kindness that took away all fear, a kindness that I felt I might trust forever, for it was like that which must belong to spirits in eternity. His daily life is illuminated by a holiness which makes his actions as impulsive and peaceful as a child's; it is a happiness to be in his presence."

Dr. Channing's hospitality was nowise limited to the companions of his children. The spirit of his mother-in-law pervaded Oakland, and the rule was to keep every room filled with guests during the bright season. When the family mansion overflowed, friends found lodgings in the immediate neighborhood. Visitors, too, from Newport, and strangers from abroad, sought his society. So that every pleasant evening was sure to find a circle of intelligent and refined persons collected in the parlors, piazza, and garden. In this kind of intercourse, much that was most beautiful in the character of Dr. Channing appeared. The absorbing thoughts of the student, the reserve of the recluse, were put aside; and with variety of information and of interests, gracious dignity, tolerance of all forms of character and opinion, and simple frankness, he welcomed those who sought him to participation in his truth and peace. His sympathy was most tender, delicate, discriminating; his wisdom wakeful and large. One of his highly-valued friends has spoken of his "perfect sincerity, his cordial reception, his politeness and courtesy, his habitual attention to the wants and habits of others, the warm pressure of his hand, his voice so rich and musical, the light of his deep-meaning eye." But it would be difficult to convey an adequate impression of the benignity, considerateness, and reverence which gave its peculiar tone to his manner. A freshness and brightness, as of the spirit world, seemed to float around him, and to sanctify all within its sphere. The feminine element, so strong in all men of genius, was dominant in his social nature. This attracted him, as has been several times remarked, to women. The romantic devotion, the untiring faithfulness, the grace, of his affection in the nearest relation, made his daily life verdant with beauty. And at all times, and on all occasions, he showed himself

the Christian gentleman. In his inmost heart he honored woman. To a sister he says: "You women, I sometimes think, are in all respects our superiors. Certainly, the world would be a dull place without you. Woman brought her love and her smile from Paradise, and these are worth more than the thornless roses and vernal airs she left." And again, to Sismondi he writes: "I am somewhat proud of my countrywomen; and you, I think, have known some who will show, that, if man has degenerated in the Western world, woman has met a better fate."

With characteristic diffidence, Dr. Channing distrusted his power of giving pleasure in the social circle. "Before the multitude I am strong," said he once to a friend, "but weak before the individual." In this particular, as in others, he judged himself too strictly. Anecdote, wit, fancy, sprightliness, graceful trifling, indeed, made no part of his conversation, and would have been out of keeping with his refined spirituality. But the richness, originality, force, of his intellect and character, appeared in their full beauty. He talked often better than he wrote, for he allowed himself more freedom; and the quickening touch of another spirit, especially of a youthful one, awoke whole crowds of brilliant thoughts, which lay entranced in the palace-halls of his memory. This topic has been eloquently treated by one whose personal experience gave point to his words.<sup>1</sup>

"He sought and longed for a perfectly free communication; and no conversation interested him more than that which, in forgetfulness of him and of one's self, and of everything extraneous, was a kind of monologue, a kind of reverie, the purest and most abstract idealism. Least of all must it be supposed that there was any assumption about him, or any stiff formality or precision, — anything that said, 'Now let us talk great talk.' Never. He did talk greatly, because he could not help it. But his manner of doing it, his manner in everything, was the most simple, the most unpretending, imaginable. At the same time he possessed a nature the most truly social. He regretted anything in himself or in others that repressed it. More than once has he said to me, 'I am *too serious*.' He longed to feel upon his spirit the free and genial breath of society. And all who have known him well must have observed, for the last fifteen years of his life, the increasing liveliness, versatility, and happiness of his social nature. The earliest days of his manhood were his darkest, — days of illness and seclu-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dewey's Discourse on the Character and Writings of Channing, pp. 31-34.

sion. They spread around him a shadow of silence, and over many of his after days a shadow of reserve. But into that shadow every later year of his life seems to have poured new and more cheering light.

“I have alluded to his social intercourse; but to unfold his character, I must speak more distinctly of his conversation. It was the best image of himself, better even than his preaching or his writing; because it was the free, unrestrained, almost unintentional outpouring of his mind, and that on themes as elevated as those of his more studied efforts. I have said that he regarded preaching as the *great* action of his life. Conversation was the *ordinary* action of his life. It was not his relaxation, but his action. It was that which showed the man, as the daily pursuit, the daily business, shows other men. Prevented as he was by ill health, and perhaps by constitutional indisposition, from mingling with the ostensible enterprises and movements of the social world around him, this was specifically his mode of action, his daily vocation. And those who have not conversed much with him can scarcely know what he was, can scarcely appreciate the richness or the beauty of his nature.

“I wish it were in my power to give any idea of the extraordinary character of this conversation. On my first acquaintance with him, it was my happiness to pass a number of weeks under his own roof. His health was then delicate; he went abroad but little; but his mind was left untouched by the frailty of his body; and I found it constantly occupied and struggling with great questions. On the highest philosophy, on the highest religion, on the highest wisdom of life, all the day long he pursued the questions which these themes present, without ever slackening, or ever turning aside to ordinary and commonplace talk. The range of his subjects was as great as their elevation; from the most recondite point in philosophy — the difference between relative and absolute truth — to the forms of philanthropic enterprise and political development around him. But his favorite themes were *man* and the *New Testament*; man, — his condition and the philosophy of his condition; the New Testament, — Jesus Christ, his teaching, and the sublimest contemplation of God. Sometimes his mind ran upon the same theme, almost without interruption, for an entire week; yet there was never any weariness in listening but the weariness of exhaustion. His view of every subject was original. I do not mean that it was singular, but that it was his own, thoroughly digested in his own mind; and I wish it were a little better understood that this is the only originality possible to any mind. His



imagination, at the same time, kindled everything into life, presented everything in new and multiform lights, spread around every point in debate such a world of illustration, that it seemed ever new, while it was ever the same. While it was ever the same, I say; and yet to a mind suffused and overflowing, like his, with the very poetry of every theme, *that* is the trial point, — to adhere with severe, philosophical accuracy to the very question. To say that he went beyond the reach of all other men of similar genius is more than I do say; but certainly I was led to admire the remarkably sober and rational character of his understanding, even more than the beauty and wealth of his imagination. I must add, to complete the view, that the style of his conversation seemed to me as perfect as that of his writing; and I sometimes thought, at the close of a day, and I still think, that, if the conversation of that day could have been taken and printed from his lips, it would have conveyed to the world as striking a proof of his great powers as anything that has ever proceeded from his pen.

“I must not leave it to be supposed that in all this there was anything of the lecturer, the speech-maker, the maker of orations by the fireside; any talking, as if it were a duty to talk wisely or gravely or instructively, or as if he thought light and gay conversation a sin or an offence: nothing could be farther from the truth. His conversation was singularly involuntary. The stream flowed and flowed on, because there was a fountain behind; out of that abundance he spake. Or if he had any intent, his manner was as that of one who would clear up his own thought, or would submit it to the judgment of another. He never aimed apparently to be religious, or spiritual, or instructive; and yet he was all these in the highest degree. You have heard of persons of whom it was said, that ‘they could talk of nothing but religion.’ The expression, you must have seen, was meant for praise; but it is a praise which I have no desire to claim for the subject of our present thoughts. And yet his conversation, though he never entered upon it with that view, was the very religion of life, the very religion of nature, the very religion of politics, society, business, the religion of every theme, — that is, the highest and most sacred thought of every theme that he touched upon. So lofty, so commanding was his thought, so did it soar above all around it, so deep was its impression, that a conversation with him was often an event in life, a high beacon that shed its light over the track of future years. I remember conversations with him, I remember single phrases, and the tone in which they were uttered, as having made upon me an impression beyond the effect of whole volumes of moral disqui-

sition. If I were asked to convey an idea of this impression by repeating his words, the attempt were vain, because it would be impossible to give the manner and the tone. But those may imagine something of this who remember the feeling awakened by his simple reading of a hymn; who recollect how, to a dull and lifeless hymn, or to that which had been made so by ordinary repetition, he communicated a character altogether new; how it became, as it were, a new creation, beneath the breathing fervor of his touching emotion and utterance.

“Indeed, there was this same singular impressiveness about his whole character. I have presented to you the picture of a man retired, reserved, isolated in appearance; of one who, for the most part, sat in his own dwelling, wrapped in meditation, or engaged in intellectual and elevated converse. But this was a being, though calm and reserved in exterior, all alive with energies, all alive with emotions, all alive with the feeling of what was going on in society around him, and in the whole wide world in which he lived. Calm he was in manner, self-restrained in fact, and in a degree as remarkable as his emotion was strong. Such was his self-control, that I thought at first it was coldness; the quiet and subdued tones of his voice fell on my ear almost like tones of apathy. But I soon learned to correct that error. I soon perceived that he was accustomed to put a strong guard upon his feelings, precisely because they needed that guard. I saw that his self-government was the fruit of much discipline. I had no doubt that in the bosom of his youth there had been a burning volcano. I had no doubt, though I never saw tears in his eyes, that there were tears in his heart. I know of nothing more touching than this restrained emotion of the strongest natures. And thus it was with every trait in his character; there was something in it that laid a powerful hold upon all who came within the sphere of its influence.”

Thus tranquilly passed Dr. Channing's days at Oakland. Up usually, in the morning, before any of his guests were risen, his quick step was heard upon the gravel walk, and, looking from the window, one saw him, with his shawl or gown wrapped round his shoulders and the dogs gambolling by his side, passing amid the shrubbery, and stopping each moment to gaze, as a newly opened flower, a gleam of sunshine on the dewy lawn, or some passing bird scattering drops from the branches, caught his eye. His own expression — “When I see my friends after the night's separation, let me receive them as new gifts from God, as raised from the dead” — describes precisely the character of his greeting. The beaming eyes, the radiant smile, the grasp of the hand, the joyous

tone, all spoke to the spirit, saying, "What an inestimable privilege it is to live together in this glorious home which our Father gives us each day anew!" Without a word or look that was not as spontaneous as the delight of a child, he seemed so softened with religious sensibility, that his very "good morning" was a welcome to prayer. We stroll with him under the deep shade of the hedges, look into the green-house, admire the white lilies, as, with their pyramid of spotless bells they drink in the golden light, watch the bees as they buzz around the hive and come and go with their treasures, bend down a branch to peep at the young birds in their nest, bask for a few moments in the sunshine, and then enter the breakfast-room, where with perfect freedom the members of the household gather early or late, according to inclination. His simple meal of coarse wheat bread and cream, with a cup of tea, is lightly despatched, and then he passes into the little room where his books and papers are awaiting him.

For an hour or more he writes down thoughts suggested in the wakeful hours of night or in his morning walk. The family are now ready for prayers, and guests and domestics, young and old, are assembled in the parlor. There, with the Bible upon his lap and some child by his side, whose hand and eye he guides across the page, he reads with the expressiveness of lively feeling a favorite passage from the Psalms or New Testament, illustrating obscure points with a few words of explanation. All then kneel, and a short petition is offered, so simple that the youngest and most ignorant can take in its meaning, so profound in sincerity that the most spiritual find their longings fully expressed, so precise that the special want of each member of the circle seems felt and remembered with appreciating sympathy. After a few pleasant words, on plans for turning the bright hours to the best use, the happy group disperses, the children or young people to their lessons, he to his work. Every hour or half-hour, more or less, according to the state of his health or the beauty of the day, he throws his gown around him, and takes a turn in the garden. At these times, an observer is struck with the calm concentration of his look, and the deliberateness of his step. Occasionally the lips move, words are murmured, and slight gestures of the hand show the intense working of the mind. He feels the enlarging, purifying, illuminating influence of the sky, and air, and sun; and his inmost spirit responds to the harmonious growth of the universe. Calmer, brighter, in a few moments he is seated again at his table, and his rapidly flying pen shows how full is the current of his thoughts. A few hours of this labor exhaust him for the day, and,



reluctantly putting aside his papers, he summons his young friends. They are reading together some history or work on philosophy, and in the summer-house or piazza the time glides swiftly away till dinner, in earnest consideration of the lessons of the past, or the profound problems of existence.

And now the long summer afternoon invites all abroad to pleasure-excursions. If the wind is from the south, and the distant roar gives token that the ocean is swelled by the influence of a storm at sea, preparations are made for a visit to the beach. Happy the guest who is to ride with Dr. Channing in his chaise! It is a most plain vehicle, indeed, and the horse knows well that he may trespass almost without remonstrance on his master's good nature; but who can regret the slowness of a drive which prolongs the delight of this conversation? Under the genial influence of nature and local associations, all restraints are loosed, and he pours forth from the springs of his experience the fullest streams of wisdom and graceful eloquence. One is irresistibly prompted to open the inmost secret to this father-confessor, to ask light on perplexed passages of life, strength in peculiar trials, and comfort in heavy sorrows. And this trust is met by a kindness so delicate, so impersonal, yet so penetrating, that the spirit feels that it is known even better than it knows itself. Morbid feelings, long prisoned in the breast, are healed and raised to vigorous freedom by the bracing air of his good sense. His disinterestedness, wide as the sky and horizon, makes small our anxieties; and meannesses vanish beneath his love, as fog-wreaths melt away at noon. And now we are on the beach. With what untiring delight he watches the combing waves, the long sweep of foam, the glitter of the retiring waters, and lifts his voice in exultation amid the rushing sounds of wind and ocean! But he is not content with the even swell upon the sands. He must show his guest the favorite spots among the rocks; and as he springs from point to point, buoyant with enthusiasm, or stands watching while the billows gather up their force, plunge headlong, and are dashed back in spray, it is hard to remember that this eager guide is an invalid of threescore years. On other afternoons, a drive to Quaker Hill, to gaze abroad over the serene landscape and the island-dotted bay, or a stroll through the glen amid the cool shadows, or a ramble in the woods, or visits to friends in the neighboring farm-houses, occupy the time till near sunset. That sacred hour he prefers to pass in a grassy path beyond the garden, where the view is unobstructed of the western heavens; and he is slow to seek the house, until the last crimson cloud is pale, and the amber tints have faded. Music,

to the charms of which he was every year becoming more sensitive, reading charades, and games with the young people, cheerful talk, consume the evening until his early hour of retirement, and then, summoning all to look at the moonlight and stars through the evergreens, he smilingly gives his benediction.

Thus passed the weeks and months of summer. Sunday brought the change of deeper quiet, abstinence from long excursions, solitude, and attendance at the neighboring meeting-house. Without any superstitious reverence, Dr. Channing felt his own need of the day of rest. "It is the Sabbath," he writes; "the remembrancer of our immortality, the soul's holiday, when it should renew itself in happier regions. May it awaken a new consciousness of what we are and of what we shall be! How gratefully we should welcome this peaceful, sacred day! After the week's chafing cares and bustle, what a privilege to pause and be refreshed with thoughts of heaven! How should I rejoice to go with a message of life and immortality to my fellow-beings!" The members of his family took an active part in the Sunday school; and he himself preached whenever his strength permitted. On these occasions, he used no notes, but appealed with hearty directness to his simple audience. But though the pleasure which he took in testifying his friendly regard to his neighbors made these services interesting to him, he found that his love of exact statements, and his habit of weighing opposite views, checked his freedom in extemporaneous discourse. He estimated his own success in this mode of preaching much more humbly, however, than did his hearers; for visitors, attracted from Newport by his celebrity, were often more impressed with the apostolic fervor and earnest piety and love of these village sermons, than with the eloquence of his more elaborate addresses.

And now scarlet and golden leaves litter the paths, the dark evergreens rise sombrely, morning fogs lie heavy on the lawn, and chill autumn winds, through the thin hedges, remind him that his season of recreation is ended. To his society in Boston will he now carry back the truth he has garnered.

Arrived in Boston, Dr. Channing's first hours were always passed with his mother. Throughout his life, it has been seen how deep and constant was his filial affection; but every year seemed only to brighten its beauty with new reverence, tenderness, regard for her wishes, and assiduous care. In a letter of consolation, he says: —

1827. "I can understand the affliction of which you write, though I have not experienced it. God has seen fit to spare my

mother, but I cannot expect her to continue long, and I feel what a change will be made in my life by her removal. A mother's love is, in some views, more touching than any other. It has more of the immutableness of the Divine goodness. It is a love which began with our very being, and follows us all our days, which no waywardness can alienate, which burns undimmed to the last hour. And will it not survive the grave? Is not a true, disinterested parental love too like the love which God bears his offspring to be blotted out? Then our parents never die to us. The sacred tie may be strengthened rather than dissolved."

A few years later he wrote in his journal:—

"*May 26, 1834.* Yesterday my mother died. What a change in my condition! During my whole life, her love has been unre-mitted. For how many years has she borne me in her thoughts and heart! I have been privileged in so long ministering to her comfort, and I trust that she has received some happiness from my affection.

"And now the friend of my whole life, who, amidst all fluctuations of other friendships, never changed, with whose very being I was entwined, is gone. The first voice I ever heard I shall hear no more; the arms that first sustained me are motionless; the expressive eye is quenched. The room where for years I received her counsels and blessings holds only her lifeless frame. Her chair is vacant!

"Dear friend, whose heart yearned over me through all trials, thou art gone! I can no longer press thy hand, read thy countenance, hear thy words of pious gratitude, offer prayers with thee to our common Father!

"She, who gave a unity to my whole being, who by her presence, interest, affection, bound together all the events of my life, has left me. Who can be to me what she has been? To whom can I be what I have been to her? A tie is broken which cannot be replaced on earth. O that we could have prolonged her days in comfort! But she has gone to One who loved her better than we could. To His will we resign her."

To an absent sister he thus expressed his feelings:—

"*May 28, 1834.* This afternoon we followed mother's remains to Cambridge, where she wished to be buried by the side of her mother. It is at the grave that we feel what Christianity has done for us. What anguish would overwhelm us at the moment of committing the dust to the dust, if we felt that we were shutting up in everlasting darkness, silence, death, all that was our friend! I



felt that the spirit was not there, — that what we most loved and revered was not there. Thanks to God for the hope of immortality ! How many of our friends are now gathered into that better world ! It seems at such moments as if we could never again shut ourselves up in this narrow sphere.

“I think of her last year with great pleasure and thankfulness. Her character seemed to improve, which is not the ordinary experience of age. She extended, instead of narrowing, her interests, and found an increasing happiness in her social affections. The kindness of her friends touched her heart more and more, and she sometimes wanted words to express her gratitude to God for surrounding her with so many who were thoughtful of her happiness. Her conversation attracted as many visitors as she could see with comfort, and yet it never seemed to enter her mind that she was capable of giving pleasure. She ascribed to the pure good-will of others what was chiefly owing to herself. I look on her last days as her best days. We must be grateful that we have not waited for her death to learn her worth ; but have, in some measure, given testimonies of love which have done much to brighten her declining years.

“Thus we are without a mother. What a change ! Our earliest, oldest, unfailing friend has gone. She to whom we seemed to belong in a peculiar sense is gone ; but gone full of years and honors, after a favored life, a venerable age, and a larger experience of happiness than falls to the lot of most human beings. I trust mother's death will not loosen our union. She was a centre to us. Let her memory be a bond. One of our consoling recollections is, that her peace was never disturbed for a moment by discord among her children.”

Of his mother's life and character he gave this brief, but truthful sketch, in a letter to a friend : —

“*June, 1834.*<sup>1</sup> I have just lost my mother. She had attained to the age of eighty-two, and the time had come for her to leave us ; and yet I do not feel the loss the less on this account, for her faculties had almost wholly escaped the influence of time, and her affections were gaining strength to the last hour. She never enjoyed life more than in her age. Released from the cares of domestic life, she was allowed to give up herself to her friends, in the quiet of her apartment ; and there her cheerful spirit, bright conversation, and strong interest in others drew round her a numerous circle, comprising many young, in whom she took great delight. She was the mother of ten children, of whom nine attained to adult

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. Joanna Baillie.

years, and seven survived her. She was left a widow, in narrow circumstances, with six sons and three daughters, the oldest about nineteen. But her energy and sound judgment established over them a salutary control, and she lived to see them prosperous in the world beyond what is common in such large families, devoted to her happiness, tenderly alive to her worth, united together in uninterrupted concord, sincere believers in Christianity, and none, I trust, strangers to its power.

“At one period of her life, my mother’s singular directness gave some appearance of hardness to her character, which time softened down. Her sensibility more and more broke through the restraints which her aversion to pretension had imposed; so that the winter of her age seemed warmed and brightened with the fervor of youthful feeling. I never witnessed in her such overflowings of gratitude to God and of social affection as in her last years. An improvement seemed going on in her character like that which death produced in her countenance, — for at the moment of death a beautiful serenity overspread her features, and her brow became almost as smooth as in youth.

“Such is the friend I have lost, — my earliest, oldest friend, — who alone of all human beings has sympathized with me through every stage of my life, and whose love seemed to connect my whole existence. Beautiful, sacred bond of parent and child! How true is it that the most precious gifts and beneficent ordinations of God are to be met with in our common paths! Under every roof are to be found these relations which are meant to be the springs of sublime virtue and the sincerest happiness.”

By the death of his mother, Dr. Channing became the head of the family; and the dignity, tender affection, faithfulness, with which he fulfilled the duties of this position could not be surpassed. With thoughtful sympathy, he made the trials, joys, responsibilities, of his brethren and sisters, nephews and nieces, his own. His generosity to each and all was unlimited, and grew with their need of his aid, counsel, or countenance. His respect for the personal independence of others, dislike of any approach to flattering attentions, aversion to patronage, stern sincerity, threw sometimes a reserve over his manner, which restrained the free communications of those whom he most desired to attract. But nothing rejoiced him more than hearty trust in his affection. He longed to be loved again with the purity and truthfulness with which he himself loved, and was deeply pained when he failed to put others at their ease. Speaking of this trait, he says: —

“I expect my friends to confide in the constancy of my affection,

as much as I do myself. I feel as if they must know what goes on in my heart, so distinct is my own consciousness of my strength of attachment. I forget that I am not very transparent, and cannot therefore be excused from outward signs of regard."

"My reserve has sometimes prevented me from doing justice to my own heart, and given me the appearance of coldness when I have been deeply touched by kindness. I recommend to you no forced expressions of feeling, but when the emotion comes to the lips, give it utterance."

"I cannot express to you the satisfaction I should find in the freest intercourse of mind with you. I wish it for both our sakes, and I cannot blame myself for not having established such an intercourse of thought and feeling. I do not mean by this that I blame you. There are often mysterious bars to the free communication of souls. I sometimes want power to open other minds to me, when I am most desirous to do it."

A close observer has well described the cloud of abstraction in which Dr. Channing sometimes appeared to dwell apart from common interests, and by which even friends felt placed at a distance.

"Intimacy with him was a rare thing; and even where it existed, it was attended with restraints not usual in the closest friendship. Where there was perfect freedom of *mind* in intercourse with him, there was not the perfect freedom of manner that ordinarily follows it. It has been said of Washington, that none of his military companions could freely lay their hand upon his shoulder. The same was true of Channing. He was a person of a delicate frame, but of a great presence. . . .

"It is extremely difficult to be at once a man of deep, earnest, continued thought, and a man of society. When fixed attention to some theme has been channelling its way in the mind all the day long, it is not easy at evening to turn it into the varied flow of easy and perhaps sportive conversation, yielding itself to all the impulses of surrounding and miscellaneous society. The very fibres of the soul have been strained till they are stiffened. . . . Add to all this the effect of a certain factitious reverence in society for him who bears the clerical office; let it be such as to forbid, if I may say so, the free encounter of wits with the literary, professional, or intelligent men that surround him; let them choose to exclude him from their occasions of natural and unrestrained intercourse; and it will be strange if he escape the influence of such a combination of causes. One may have a nature the most bland, gentle, and affectionate that ever existed, and yet it will not be strange, if, in such circumstances, he shuts himself up in his own thoughts, and,



indeed, acquires a habit of pursuing out his own train of thoughts, so that he seems to be alone, even in society. I think, indeed, that this habit contributed, more than anything else, to impart to Dr. Channing the air of isolation, and to those around him the feeling of constraint. He was always pursuing out his own thought ; he seemed, without intending it, to *use* other men ; everything came into his crucible, and was melted and moulded into his form.”<sup>1</sup>

But it was the predominance of the ethical element in Dr. Channing's nature, which chiefly explains the awe induced by his presence. Ever-wakeful conscience gazed down upon one through his whole expression, and there seemed no covert from the calm penetration of his eye. Pretension felt abashed, self-seeking humbled, before the ideal of goodness shining out from his spirit. In his look and air there was an intentness, an expectancy, a concentrated force, which, while they stimulated thought, checked desire of expression. His truthfulness made the interview solemn as a visit to the shrine of an oracle. And yet there was no appearance of severe inspection or stoical hardness. On the contrary, no trait was more remarkable than his delicate regard for individual privacy, his modest oversight of weaknesses, his deference even for the frivolous and young. Amidst keen self-reproach one felt strengthened with new consciousness of moral life, new aspirations after integrity. It was plain that his reverence for the central power of good, in every spirit, was yet stronger than his quick sense of superficial attainments in character. How habitually self-distrustful he was in his relations to others will appear by a few extracts from his letters.

“ Among my gifts, I never considered that of counsel as holding a high place ; and I have come to think that duty is so far ‘an individual thing, so dependent on the inward frame and on peculiarities which only he who has them knows, that I have less solicitude than ever to be an adviser.”

“ This is all very vague, and sometimes we injure a friend by giving him the idea of a danger without putting a finger on the precise fault. I suspect, however, that we cannot serve one another much beyond such general hints. A man may be set to work, turned upon himself, by such remarks ; but, unless his own consciousness reveals his difficulty, he can hardly learn it from abroad.”

“ You know me to be above affectation, and to have sufficient self-reliance in certain cases. But I continually see people who, in the ordinary concerns of life, and very important ones too, are wiser than I am ; and I fear to do injury rather than good by interference.”

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dewey's Discourse on the Character and Writings of Channing, pp. 27, 28.

His unaffected respect for others made Dr. Channing most unwilling to censure or to listen to words of condemnation. The levity with which character is discussed, and private affairs are canvassed, was shocking to his nice sense of honor. He was utterly intolerant of gossip and scandal, and ever prompt to defend an assailed reputation, or to explain unfavorable reports. To a friend he writes : —

“I would have speech free as the wind in regard to principles, institutions, great truths, abuses, oppressions ; but in regard to individual acts and character, I feel more and more the duty of caution. I have *faith* in my fellow-creatures ; but it is exercised in the recognition of a deep, imperishable goodness amidst many and sometimes great imperfections. I forgive everything to the generous and disinterested. Still more, I admire and love, even where I see very partial developments of character, and sometimes unaccountable mixtures of evil with goodness. I believe in their future perfection. How I should rejoice to see it now !”

In further illustration of this trait, the Discourse from which free extracts have been already made may be again quoted.

“His was a goodness of heart the most gentle, tender, and considerate. I do not believe that one unkind action can be found in his life. I never heard him utter a harsh and hasty word concerning any human being. But here I must still discriminate. In some respects he was a severe judge of men. Calmly and considerately his opinion was expressed ; but it was strong and clear, and doubtless unsparing. He seemed at times a rigorous censor. Especially towards sensual aberrations he was so, and had some right to be, since he showed no indulgence towards himself. But his rigor was always tempered with pity. Informed, on an occasion, of a person who had fallen in this respect, ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I know that he has dishonored himself,’ with such a tone of rebuke and sorrow united as I can never forget. That was doubtless an awfully severe moral judgment which he once pronounced on the nature of retribution, but it was not harsh nor cruel. A representation of the pains to be inflicted by conscience in another life having been mentioned, as very impressive, ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘and it is all true ; but, after all, does not the heaviest retribution for sin lie in the sin itself, — lie in being a sinner, — lie in the darkness and moral annihilation which sin causes, although the offender be unconscious of it ?’ Terrible thought ! but one breathing lenity and compassion, while, at the same time, none but a mind awfully impressed by the evil of sin could have suggested it. But so were all things tempered in him. He was doubtless, from the very elevation of his sentiments, a strict

and fearful judge of the characters of men ; but how candid, considerate, and forbearing he was, all who have conversed much with him must know.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Channing judged himself, indeed, far more strictly than he did others, and demanded more of his own will. His magnanimity in acknowledging limitations and errors, accepting criticism, and leaving his reputation to the just care of his fellow-men, may be shown by the following extracts from his correspondence.

“ I have come to think but little about the judgments people form of me ; for they can know but little of the actions on which they pass sentence. I expect frequent misrepresentation as a matter of course. I wish to be influenced by indirect rather than direct judgments about me. To explain myself. When I do right, all good minds virtually approve me, whether they know what I have done or not. Their love of virtue is a love of me, as far as I am virtuous. So when I do wrong, though wholly undetected, all good minds condemn me as truly as if they witnessed the particular deed. This is the only judgment to be hoped or feared, and this is infallible. I wish to take refuge from superficial censures in this. . . . As to your want of faith, is it of the same nature with mine ? I have faith in great principles, and faith in their ultimate triumph ; but I often want faith in the sympathy of individuals with whom I converse, and shrink from expressing the truth, lest it should meet no response. This I am trying to overcome.”

“ You have begun well to tell me of my errors. What you have begun half in sport I should be glad to have you carry on in earnest. I would know myself, if possible ; for I think that I am prepared for the knowledge, by my strong confidence in the capacity of reformation which belongs to our nature, and which God is most ready to assist.”

“ I ask you to retaliate my severities by setting all my defects and sins before me. If I do not profit, I will promise to be grateful.”

“ I thank you for your remarks on my Lectures. You were right in thinking that I like the greatest freedom of criticism. My principal objection to criticism is, that it recalls my mind to what I have written. When a work of mine is fairly through the press, I wish to shake hands with it and say a last word of blessing, and to know it no more.”

“ I thank you for your remarks on my article. They were only too sparing. Do read the article when it comes out. You will find that in almost every instance I have followed your suggestions, and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dewey's Discourse on the Character and Writings of Channing.



I feel my work to be improved. I need a counsellor. My mind is sometimes too fervent for accuracy or caution of expression, and, fallen as we are on evil times, every word needs to be weighed."

"I am unwilling to owe reputation to concealment of any kind. I have not shrunk from saying what I think true, for the sake of nursing my good name."

Playful irony was a means of reproof that Dr. Channing occasionally used with great effect in his immediate circle; but there was such a light of kindness in his eye and smile, and such a purity, innocence, and childlike sportiveness in his allusions, that the most sensitive could not feel pained. His silence, too, in the presence of unreasonable emotion, was more impressive than most earnest speech. Only on extreme occasions did he express indignation, and then it was tempered with pity. His habitual mildness was strikingly manifested once to a sceptic, who was reproaching Jesus Christ for his "angry denunciations." In answer, Dr. Channing opened the New Testament and read the passages referred to aloud. As soon as he had finished, his hearer said, "O, if *that* was the tone in which he spoke, it alters the case!" He recognized that justice might be at once firm, and free from personal passion. This consistent gentleness of manner, however, was the result of self-command. By temperament he was ardent, even to impetuosity, and nothing in his character was more beautiful than the serene benignity with which he controlled his quick impulses.

Enlightened will, indeed, presided over all his native instincts. "I had naturally," he once said, "not a little physical fear, but I have outgrown it. A sudden emergency *might* prove me a coward; but give me time to survey the foe or danger, and I should not tremble." Probably he mistook sensibility and imagination for fear; but if so, he had certainly verified in experience his own words, — "I call that mind free, which, through confidence in God and in the power of virtue, has cast off all fear but that of wrong-doing, which no menace or peril can inthrall, which is calm in the midst of tumults, and possesses itself though all else be lost."<sup>1</sup> When the Hon. Josiah Quincy was delivering a centennial address upon the settlement of Boston, in the Old South church, the alarm was given that one of the galleries was falling beneath the pressure of the multitude. The consternation and uproar in the vast crowd were appalling. "Dr. Channing rose," said a friend who was near him, "looked around, saw the impossibility of escape, and then remained standing, 'calm and self-possessed,' without a change in his coun-

<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. IV. p. 73. One Volume Edition, p. 174.

tenance or attitude, till the agitation had subsided." Very seldom, too, was he known to exhibit the usual signs of grief. In the midst of persons excited by a pathetic appeal, some one said to him, "How can you be so unmoved?" "My tears," he answered, "do not lie so near my eyes." Once, however, when a very dear sister-in-law was taken away, he went to visit his mother, and, kneeling down by the side of her chair, was for a time borne away by the flood of his sorrow. And on retiring from his mother's death-bed, he could only utter, while his eyes were suffused and his voice trembled, "In such an hour may you have the consolation of knowing that you have been a good son." A friend, who carried him the dreadful news of Charles Follen's death, relates that an expression of agony convulsed his features; but instantly he covered his face with his hands, and then, looking up with a most radiant and triumphant smile, he said, "It is all well." Thus, in most trying scenes, the spirit shone out unclouded.

Dr. Channing's perfect self-control was shown, also, in his forbearance under injuries. In relation to a slander that was once circulated about him, he thus wrote to a friend:—

"*Boston, November 9, 1837.* I like to know the evil that is said of me, because much of it may be traced to misapprehension of what really took place, and because sometimes part of it has a foundation in real defects of character, and may be used for self-knowledge and self-reform. . . . I shall not be angered. Disappointment with me in such cases is sorrowful, never angry, and the impression of wrong is soon effaced by the subjects of deep, absorbing interest which every day pour in on my mind. I have the placableness of a short memory, if not of a Christian spirit. This must not trouble —, for it does not trouble me. I only ask for light to make my path plain. Happily, on this point I am sure of myself, which I cannot say of other defects. I make it my rule to spend my *whole income*, to lay up *nothing*. At the same time, I hold myself bound not to exceed my income, and it is possible that in my case, as in others, the self-denial and economy necessary to keep within this bound may pass with some for meanness. On this head I have no solicitude, because, from the nature of the case, I am sure, not only of my motives, but of my conduct. This may explain reports to my injury."

"*Boston, November 26, 1837.* As to the reports themselves, they do not disturb me. I have gone through the hardening process to which all public men are exposed in our country, and not in vain. I am accustomed to the free use which sects, parties, and individuals make of my name, and I hope that something higher

than habit keeps me calm. I have, too, an excellent specific against injuries of this kind, namely, a short memory, aided by absorption in very interesting subjects. We visionaries, as we are called, have this privilege, from living in the air, that the harsh sounds from earth make only a slight impression on the ear. . . . I have no desire to know the particular reports, because they cannot help me to understand myself. Sometimes this common liar, rumor, does tell truths, and I hold myself bound to be instructed by an enemy. But in the present case I think I know myself. And here let me say that I have regretted sending you my last letter on one account. I spoke there of my rules or habits of expense. The love I have for you and — makes me willing to speak to you of such personal affairs, but to the world, to my harsh judges, to evil reporters, I have no explanation to make. My reputation, if it is good for anything, will take care of itself. I beg you, therefore, to say nothing of that part of my letter to any person. Be not anxious to vindicate me, except on the ground of your own observation. I can furnish you no weapons. I know how many evil rumors are spread about me; not that I have enemies, for I doubt whether one human being cherishes any malignity towards me; but my retired habits favor much misapprehension, and then my defects, with a little exaggeration, furnish good topics for the gossip of the day. These rumors I leave to themselves. I would not on any account undergo the labor of ‘ferreting’ them out. I only ask that my friends will do me justice. I am ashamed to talk so much of myself, and here let the subject drop.”

Most strange, indeed, it was that any one could have ever suspected this generous, hospitable, open-handed man of illiberality in money matters. To his relatives, to the deserving and struggling, to the poor, to charitable enterprises, he gave without stint. In the minutest practical affairs, as in his highest professed principles, his life was love. Possibly an explanation of this gratuitous calumny may be found in domestic circumstances to which he once had occasion thus to refer: —

“*January*, 1842. I am unable to make the loan which you request. The little property which can be called strictly my own is loaned to relatives, and had I more, the same disposition would be made of it. The property which passes for mine, but which is my wife’s, I regard and treat as hers. I never invest it, but leave it to the care of friends, as was the case before our marriage, and, indeed, her control and use of it are essentially the same as at that period. I could serve such a cause as yours only by a donation,



or by loaning income. But, I am sorry to say, neither of these modes of assistance is in my power. Our rule is, to lay up nothing, to add nothing to our property, to expend our whole income, and to seek secure, not productive, investments of property. I make this communication for you, and you only, because I wish you to understand that it is no indifference to your cause which leads me to withhold the aid you ask. It would rejoice me to assist you, — to give something more than good-wishes to an experiment so interesting to a Christian.”

From his position as the minister of a leading congregation and a distinguished man of letters, as well as from the social relations into which he was brought by birth and by marriage, Dr. Channing was connected with the highest class of Boston society; and refinement of feeling, tastes, and habits made him value at their full worth all means of elegance. But, as has been fully shown, his whole thought and aim were to throw open and diffuse the privileges of cultivated life. He had an utter aversion to the exclusiveness and arrogance of fashion. A few passages from his correspondence will show his desire to lessen the distance between himself and his less-favored brethren.

“*April, 1835.* I wish more and more a simple, unostentatious style of living. The inconsistency of our habits with Christianity strikes me more and more. They separate us from our fellow-creatures, instead of spreading our sympathy and keeping love in perpetual exercise. I wish to bear witness to the spirit of Christianity, and to urge on men the duty of living for their own and others’ perfection as they have not done, and my own habits must not war with my teaching. My aim is to spend nothing on myself which health and usefulness do not require.”

“*May, 1835.* I am pained by the narrow, exclusive spirit which prevails even in our republic. Whilst we value the society of the more cultivated, let us look on every human being as one of our family.”

“*June 22, 1835.* So you are building a house. By what sympathy is it that we are both carrying on the same work at once? I hope, however, your practical wisdom has kept you from my error. My house threatens to swell beyond my means, so that I cannot think of it with a perfectly quiet conscience. This is the only point in which I am in danger of extravagance. I spend nothing on luxuries, amusements, shows. My food is the simplest; my clothes sometimes call for rebuke from affectionate friends, not for their want of neatness, but for their venerable age.

But one indulgence I want, — a good house, open to the sun and air, with apartments large enough for breathing freely, and commanding something of earth and sky. A friend of mine repeated to me the saying of a child, — ‘Mother, the country has more sky than the town.’ Now I want sky, and my house, though in a city, gives me a fine sweep of prospect, and an air almost as free as the country.

“I do not, however, suffer even a house to be an essential. When I think of Him who had not where to lay his head, and of the millions of fellow-creatures living in outward and inward destitution, I feel doubts and misgivings in enjoying the many accommodations which respectability is thought to require. To a Christian, to one who hungers and thirsts after moral excellence, what perplexities and obstructions are offered by the present condition of society! How hard to realize our conception of disinterested virtue! How the fetters of custom, forged by a self-indulgent world, weigh on us, and intrall the purer and more generous feelings! Were I entering on life, instead of approaching its end, with my present views and feelings, and with no ties, I should strive for a condition which, without severing me from society, would leave me more free to act from my own spirit, to follow faithfully and uncompromisingly the highest manifestations of virtue made to my mind. I mean not, however, to repine. I have not been wholly a slave to outward and inferior influences, and there is a world of true, perfect freedom.”

“*October, 1835.* Had I more strength and wealth, I should devote myself to the improvement of the mass of the people, especially the laboring classes; but I cannot speak to them, and my means are scattered by so many claims, that I cannot sustain others to labor among them.”

“*June, 1837.* I see no reason why a person should dress plainly because he is religious; but there is a reason why we all should. I cannot bear to see finery and rags near each other. If we would clothe the naked, instead of dressing extravagantly, how much better it would be! I desire to have the finest taste cultivated in all, to have the power of perceiving and enjoying beauty called out in all. But I cannot wear costly garments while I see such a man as Allston scarcely able to live. What a disgrace is it to Boston, that the greatest genius of this country in his department should be in want! Millions are spent in decoration every year, but nothing is given to him. I would have our private dwellings simple, but our public edifices magnificent models of taste, and ornaments to the city. I would have a public gallery freely open. We should

not keep pictures at home, or more than one, perhaps, and the rest should be for the community. Expensive furniture is of the least possible value, because it is so artificial; and, in this country, it is a source of great trouble, from needing so much care to keep it in order. The way to be comfortable here is to live simply."

"*August, 1837.* I speak of my *faith* in the coming kingdom of heaven upon earth, and yet I feel its weakness. We all need to believe more profoundly in what may be accomplished now within us and around us by the helps of Christianity and of God's spirit. How prone we all are to make the world, as it now exists, the standard of our hopes, efforts, and lives!"

"*September 25, 1838.* I shall read your article on 'Domestic Service' with much interest. It is a subject which forces itself on me often. The true relation between families and their domestics is little understood. One would think that living under one roof would be a tie of some strength, and that people crossing each other's path every hour would come to sympathize in one another's weal and woe; but among us there is little fellow-feeling; not that there is unkindness or injustice, but much mutual indifference. I trust that we are in a better way, and that the complaints about domestics will wake up people to ask if the relation may not need some essential reform. In this country, the idea of *respectability* must be associated with domestic service, and nothing but ignorance on both sides prevents this."

"*September, 1838.* The intelligence of our people is what we must be judged by. The higher class here is continually 'invaded' and filled from below. Consequently, we cannot have the refinement, the grace, of the higher classes abroad. We have not their distinctive accomplishments, their conventional manners. But in reality we have more vigor of mind, a rough, healthy energy for common pursuits."

This desire of elevating all men to the privileges of the most refined each year colored more deeply the tone of thought, conversation, and preaching of Dr. Channing. He saw that political freedom and equality are of little value without social freedom and equality, and that these can be practically attained only by a reconstruction of social relations. These views led him to watch with deep anxiety the tendencies of his adopted city. He felt proud of her intelligence and philanthropy, and was inclined to think that no community in Christendom surpassed her in purity, justice, and efforts for general improvement. But he regarded with pain her rapidly increasing material prosperity, and still more the growing in-



fluence of wealth and fashion. The following extracts will indicate his feelings in relation to Boston.

1835. "A census just taken in this city reports our number to be seventy-seven thousand, and yet the people are not satisfied. They want a new railroad to connect us with the Lakes and the West, which will double our population. What good is to come from this great accumulation of people I do not see. If we loved people more by having more swarming about us, I should not object; but I fear men grow cheaper, and are less cared for, in large cities than in small."

"*May*, 1836. We are a city too much given to croaking. I have been told that we were on the brink of ruin ever since I knew the place. Those whose duty it is to carry forward society despair of it. They despair of the body of the people, despair of our institutions, despair of liberty through the world. Too many of our young men grow up in a school of despair. Instead of hearing a generous, kindling voice, summoning them to the service of their country and mankind, they hear the palsying tones of cold derision or desponding prophecy, and the effect on the young I know to be mournful. Not long ago, I received a letter from a very intelligent European, asking me with much concern whether he could trust the report of a friend just returned from Boston, who had told him that we in this city had given up the cause of freedom in despair, and that we were prepared for monarchy. In reply, I gave him to understand that a stranger was apt to misinterpret our croaking, that our heart was sounder than our language, that a man who should take us at our word, and set up for king, would find a strange dearth of subjects; but still, that there was a scepticism which augured badly for the country. Much as I lament our want of tolerance, I lament our want of faith in human improvement much more. This hangs as a weight on our political and religious progress. What a new city this would become, if the enlightened and influential would enter with a trustful spirit on the work of forming a community worthy of freedom, and fitted to sustain free institutions!

"You will not think that I undervalue the advantages or improvements of the city in which I live. Did I not love and honor it, I should say nothing of its defects. Believing, as I do, that it contains elements of improvement to be found, perhaps, in no other city on earth, I am anxious that the obstructions to their development should be removed. I would leave it for no spot under heaven. But may I not, therefore, see, and should I not speak of its defects? Boston can afford to be spoken of truly and plainly. In thinking so, I pay it the best tribute of respect."

1837. "In spite of the deadening power of habit, in spite of

the mighty worldly movement, the rush for gain, which seems to absorb all our energies, there is some higher life, some consciousness of the great defects of our social state and of individual virtue, some aspiration after something better. Winter has its signs of spring, swellings of leaf-buds on the naked branches. I live by faith and hope, and was never farther from despair.

“The passion for lectures continues, and these and other pleasures have shut up our theatres almost entirely. I hope the next triumphs of reason and civilization will be over great parties. Are we not cultivated enough for *society*? Now we congregate; but ought it to satisfy our ambition to take the first rank among gregarious animals?”

And now let us take an outline view of a day of Boston life. The sun is just rising, and the fires are scarcely lighted, when, with rapid step, Dr. Channing enters his study. He has been wakeful during many hours, his brain teeming, and, under the excitement of his morning bath, he longs to use the earliest moments for work. His eye and smile are so bright, his step is so elastic, his whole air so buoyant, — the spirit, in a word, seems so to shine through his slight frame, — that a stranger would not anticipate the languor which protracted labor will bring. “Dr. Channing small and weak!” said a Kentuckian, who was a fervent admirer of his writings; “I thought he was six feet, at least, in height, with a fresh cheek, broad chest, voice like that of many waters, and strong-limbed as a giant.” And now, in this morning’s time, you see how radiant he is with energy. His first act is to write down the thoughts which have been given in his vigils; next, he reads a chapter or more in Griesbach’s edition of the Greek Testament; and after a quick glance over the newspapers of the day, he takes his light repast. Morning prayers follow, and then he retires to his study-table. If he is reading, you will at once notice this peculiarity, that he studies pen in hand, and that his book is crowded with folded sheets of paper, which continually multiply, as trains of thought are suggested. These notes are rarely quotations, but chiefly questions and answers, qualifications, condensed statements, germs of interesting views; and when the volume is finished, they are carefully selected, arranged, and, under distinct heads, placed among other papers in a secretary. If he is writing, unless making preparation for the pulpit or for publication, the same process of accumulating notes is continued, which, at the end of each day or week, are also filed. And as your eye scans the interior of the secretary, you observe that it is already filled with heaps of similar notes, arranged in order, with titles over each compartment. These

are the materials for the work on "Man." When a topic is to be treated at length in a sermon or essay, these notes are consulted, the reflections, conjectures, doubts, conclusions, of many years are reviewed, and then, with treasures of memory orderly arranged, Dr. Channing fuses and recasts his gathered ores, under the warm impulse of the moment. He first draws up a skeleton of his subject, selecting with special care and making prominent the central principle that gives it unity, and from which branch forth correlative considerations. Until perfectly clear in his own mind as to the essential truth of this main view, he cannot proceed. Questions are raised, objections considered, explanations given, definitions stated, what is merely adventitious and accidental swept aside, the ground cleared, in a word, and the granite foundation laid bare for the corner-stone. And now the work goes rapidly forward. With flying pen he makes a rough draft of all that he intends to say, on sheets of paper folded lengthwise, leaving half of each page bare. He then reads over what he has written, and on the vacant half-page supplies defects, strikes out redundancies, indicates the needed qualifications, modifies expressions. Thus sure of his thought and aim, and conscientiously prepared, he abandons himself to the ardor of composition.

Dr. Channing, however, self-governed and methodical though he was, did not always find himself in a fit mood to write; and then he forbore to force his mind to unwilling effort. He knew that fallow seasons must alternate with fruitfulness. He thus describes his own experience: —

"I have great faith in inspiration; but it is a fruit and reward of faithful toil, not a chance influence entirely out of our power."

"There is often a mysteriousness in the combination of constitutional qualities. Some men with high intellectual endowments, and fine dispositions too, live almost useless lives, in consequence of a diseased sensitiveness, over which the will has no power. Sometimes I have seen this disease mitigated, if not removed, by a change of circumstances, compelling the individual to exert and commit himself. In truth, what we call hard necessity is often our best friend. One thing I learn by growing experience, — how much more the happiness and usefulness of life depend on a right balance of mind than on remarkable gifts. I am less and less a worshipper of mere intellect."

"That we have succeeded is no pledge of future success. Perhaps I have singular consciousness of the variableness and instability of my intellectual energies; but whilst it damps no effort, it keeps me from all hope which may be turned into mortification."



“I have spoken of my doubts as to my own mind. I do not mean that I see any instability in my intellectual *acquisitions*; but that life and force of thought which give to writing all its efficiency, without which learning is dull, and truth falls dead from the lips or pen, this mysterious energy comes and goes, — by what laws I cannot tell. In truth, this sun-like brightness and warmth of conception, when it does come upon me, — and I should be ungrateful not to feel that it has sometimes visited me, — is welcomed as an inspiration from above. I hope it will not desert me; but I do not presume upon it.”

From his habit of intense contemplation, and his faithful use of bright hours, came Dr. Channing's power of vivid conception. A few grand principles, early received into his longing spirit, had assimilated and organized materials of growth from facts of his experience, until they appeared before him as palpable realities. His work was to extend their kingdom; and current events he used as occasions for establishing their sway. Thus he was always in earnest; his aim was clear, and he wasted no time in random efforts. Well-balanced vigor of intellect, the fruit of patient discipline, gave directness to his thoughts and effectiveness to his expression. He belonged, as has been justly said, to the “poetic order of philosophic minds.”<sup>1</sup> Imagination, ideality, the perception of analogies, was probably his strongest natural faculty; but, under the command of conscience, his powers of analysis and discrimination had been trained to minutest accuracy; and good-sense presided, like a judge, over every mental operation. Word-fencing in all its modes, disputation, and tricks of debate, he detested; but logic, in its highest form, of strong grasp of central principles, natural method, detailed application of laws, and exact statement, he possessed in a rare degree. The enthusiasm, which, under some conditions of life, would have embodied itself in poetry, made his composition a dynamic rather than a mechanical process. And his love of beauty gave a living warmth and grace to the simple style that clothed the symmetric structure of his argument.

When once he was done with a sermon or essay, Dr. Channing quickly forgot it. He had no eagerness to multiply hearers, to win notoriety, and to guard his writings from attacks or plagiarism. He claimed no exclusive ownership in the common elements of God's truth and love; and, humbly thankful for what he had received and had been the medium of diffusing, he forgot the things behind and pressed on. In a letter to Dr. Tuckerman, he says: —

<sup>1</sup> Essay on the Philosophical Character of Channing, by Rowland G. Hazard.

"I feel an almost insuperable reluctance to look back, and read over and put in order what I have written. I have something of the nature of the inferior animals in regard to my literary offspring. When once they have taken flight, I cast them off, and have no desire of further acquaintance. I have postponed this work, on account of its unpleasantness, being unwilling to cloud my summer with it."

By noon, Dr. Channing's power of study and writing is spent, and he seeks the fresh air. In company with his friend Mr. Phillips, he walks in the sunny streets around the Common, discussing high themes of religion and humanity, or attends to business arrangements, in conducting which he shows the same quick comprehension and sound judgment which characterize him in moral and spiritual relations, or goes to the Athenæum to look through the files of foreign papers and new journals, or makes calls upon parishioners and acquaintances, or visits some of the poor and desolate families whose names are on his lists. After dinner, he lies for a time upon the sofa, and walks again or drives into the country. Sunset in the city, as at Newport, he keeps as a holy season, looking from upper windows, which command wide prospects, over the broad basin of Charles River and the undulating range of Brighton and Milton hills. During the winter twilight he likes to be silent and alone.

After tea, he usually listens for an hour or more to reading from some of his young relatives or female friends, interspersing illustrative remarks, and leading off conversation upon interesting points. Then guests come in, strangers to be introduced, earnest reformers seeking his sympathy or advice, familiar acquaintances with interesting topics of the day, or members of the family who have been to hear Dr. James Walker's profound discourses on philosophy, or Ralph Waldo Emerson's brilliant lectures, where ancient wisdom smiles with new-born beauty. On the rich topics thus presented he discourses with full, soaring thought that lifts the hearer to unwonted heights, and yet with unaffected deference to the most careless word of the youngest in the circle. On other occasions, a party of select friends gather in his rooms by invitation, for the purpose of unfolding some great subject of speculative or practical interest, not in the way of discussion so much as of colloquy. A listener will be much impressed at such times with one trait, which at first seems inexplicable in so earnest a person as Dr. Channing. For the most part, he leaves to others all eloquent outpourings of faith on the great principles involved, and limits himself to the much humbler path of suggesting doubts, marking limits, stating

difficult problems, arraying objections in fullest force, and pruning luxuriant raptures with keen criticism and unsparing qualification. But on closer observation, one is touched with reverence to see that this unattractive attitude of mind is the result of intense love of truth, justice, personal unconsciousness, and a respect for other minds too genuine to mock them with a flattering show of honor. Other parties he delights to collect to listen to readings from Shakespeare, or to recitations by Mr. William Russell. This is a pleasure which he greatly enjoys. "I have always been inclined," he says in a letter, "to love people for their voices. A musical voice wins its way to my heart; and when it communicates to me the grand and beautiful thoughts of a work of genius, it is particularly captivating." On yet other evenings, he meets a few gentlemen to consider gravely and profoundly, with a view to practical measures, the wants and tendencies of the times. It falls to him, generally, to propose and open the subject; and the breadth of view, the justice at once to conservatism and radicalism, the reverence for the old blended with hope for a higher good, the fidelity to his own convictions, yet hearty candor to opponents, with which this is done, show how habitual is his feeling, that only from the combination of many minds pervaded by love of truth can there be an approximation to infallibility. Yet "always he seemed to have a thought beyond everybody's thought that he conversed with." In the following remarks on another he drew his own portrait, as he appeared in such assemblies. "It was a great struggle to him to oppose others, and yet he never shrank from what he thought right. Some men have the organ of combativeness, and seem to take pleasure in conflict. They are hard and rough, and suffer nothing in wounding others. The firmness of such persons I value very little. It is often a vice. The combination of energy with sweetness is the perfection we must strive for." Once in a winter, or possibly oftener, his evening hearth was brightened by the presence of Washington Allston. He loved his friend for his lofty purity of character, as much as he admired his grand genius; and the courtesy with which each recognized the other's greatness was most noble. Mr. Allston was prompt to seek his friend's judgment of a new picture, so much did he confide in his simple instincts of beauty and truthfulness of taste. And by the hour would Dr. Channing listen, rapt and silent, with childlike animation on his spiritual countenance, whilst the painter poured forth his golden floods of high idealism, devout sentiment, criticism, anecdote, description. He joyfully made the sacrifice of wasted days following such wakefulness, for the artist's best hour for talk was midnight.



During the last years of his life, Dr. Channing's desire rapidly enlarged of forming wider acquaintance with his fellow-men, and he was led to visit other cities, and to travel. In New York and Philadelphia he formed most interesting and improving friendships, and was profoundly moved by the affectionate regard with which he was everywhere greeted. Absorbed in the pursuit of sublime ends, retiring in his habits, naturally "diffident," as he described himself, "to the verge of shyness," and rather pained than gratified by being made an object of notice, it very slowly broke upon his apprehension, that a combination of character and events had made him a power among men. Private manifestations of sympathy touched him most deeply. After speaking to a friend of the humbling sense of defects called out by what seemed to him undue public admiration, he continues: "It is on other occasions, that I feel that my powers have been used for a good end. It is when a nursery-man forgets his plants and customers to express his interest in my views, and a retired Quaker family is moved by my presence, that I become conscious that I have found my way to the hearts of my fellow-creatures. This is better than fame, a thousand times."

From many records of excursions, which illustrate his delight in scenes of natural beauty, the following may be selected as very characteristic, while interesting also from its associations.

#### "NIAGARA FALLS.

"I arrived last evening at this spot, — the great object of my journey, as far as anything but health could be called an object, — and was repaid almost by one view for all fatigues. I find that I knew nothing of this wonderful place. I will not say that the *half* had not been told me; for I feel as if *nothing* had been told. People have talked and written about it, but one is tempted to think that they did not understand what they had seen, until he recollects that a man must speak of Niagara in its own tones, or his voice will be but a faint echo, giving no conception of the original. Niagara must tell you its own story, or you will never hear it.

"The pictures I had seen of this place, and the fact that some persons had been disappointed by the first view, rather prepared me to meet this wonder of the world with emotions not very different from what had been excited before. But the first view taught me that I was coming under a new spell, and was to be swayed and lifted up by a mightier energy than I had ever met. The first view scattered all my doubts and misgivings. A new voice, waking the whole soul, came to me from the cataract. It was about sunset, at the close of a long day's ride, when I was so wearied that

I had made up my mind not to look at the falls until the morning, lest I should not greet them with due admiration. It was at this moment that I caught a glimpse of them from the carriage. Instantly, I felt that it was not necessary to dress up my mind for an introduction to the scene. We were friends in a moment. I was not awe-struck, as by the presence of a mighty stranger. Here was a more glorious revelation, a concentration, if I may so speak, of that power which had been for years my daily joy, as manifested in heaven and earth, and my soul exulted, burst forth to meet it, to mingle with and partake it.

“I know not how far I am peculiar; but such scenes have almost an exhilarating influence. The sublimity around me seems to call forth something congenial within. Instead of shrinking before the majesty of nature, my mind rather dilates into a proportionate elevation. Instead of fear, I become a hero. I am driven to the edge of precipices. I want to draw as near as may be to the thunder and rush of the torrent. Perhaps the awful power manifested in such scenes is less terrific on account of the strong impressions I receive of the *beauty* with which it is strangely blended. This beauty is more striking on account of its union with the grand. I am almost tempted to say, that Niagara is as beautiful as it is sublime. I wish I had time to speak of this feature. I agree with Miss Sedgwick, that ‘justice has never been done to its beauty.’ I have always been alive to the beauty of waterfalls. When I visited Terni or Velino, — one of the most exquisite spots, — I was almost indignant at Byron, who talked of the ‘hell of waters.’ You must come here, dear —. A visit to this spot is an era in one’s life. I feel as if I were richer for life. The universe has become nobler in my eyes. I know more of its Author.”

The last spring of Dr. Channing’s life was passed in travelling with his family through the interior of Pennsylvania, along the romantic valleys of the Juniata and Susquehanna. Of this journey he thus speaks: —

“*July 14, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> I have been prevented from writing in part by another illness, brought on me by my rashness. I have long had an earnest desire to visit the interior of Pennsylvania, especially the river Juniata and the valley of Wyoming. I forget whether your journey carried you among this glorious scenery. If so, you will understand how much I enjoyed. But fearing the heat, I started too early, and the state of the roads led me to try the canal-boats by night, — the very peril I had determined to avoid, — and

<sup>1</sup> To Miss Harriet Martineau.

the result was, that I reached the valley of Wyoming only to be a prisoner nearly a month in an inn at Wilkesbarre, the principal town in that region. As soon as I could leave my bed, and bear the light, I found a compensation for my confinement in sitting at my window, which overlooked the Susquehanna, and receiving the soothing influences of this tranquil valley.<sup>1</sup> . . . .

“To me, the burden of life — never overpowering — has been unspeakably lightened by my intercourse with Nature. Nature has been, and is, my true, dear friend. She is more than a pleasure, even a deep, substantial, elevating joy. I feel as a stranger in new cities, and often in well-known circles; but I am at home amidst streams, mountains, valleys, which I have never known before. Nature does not alienate me from society, but reconciles me to it. In her order and beauty I see types and promises of a higher social state. I am sure that God will call forth a yet nobler beauty from the soul. Indeed, he is constantly doing so. There are human beings, human countenances, which speak to us as Nature never did. I earnestly desire to open this fountain of happiness to the mass of men. I am now in the country, surrounded by grand and interesting scenery; but how few who live in the midst of it have an eye and heart open to the wonderful spectacle!

“I live in the faith that the slumbering faculties of the multitude are to be awakened, that the rich provision God has made for all shall not always be the monopoly of the few. You speak of popular music springing up in your country. I rejoice to hear it. I want the common people to be refined as well as instructed, and believe that music will do them more good than much of the arid, dead knowledge now communicated to them. Have I told you what pleasure I have felt from the expressions of gratitude which I have received from mechanics in your country, for my efforts to elevate the laboring classes? I find my books circulating among them freely, and awaking some enthusiasm. *To me this is fame.* I wish my example might teach enlightened men to approach these classes with manly thoughts, and with confidence in their capacity of appreciating truths of a generous character. Enlightened men leave the multitude to the bigot and the narrow priest. How wonderful that *Christianity* should be used to depress the poor! You have done your part. May you live to do more!

“In my late journey, I read your last two stories, — *The Norwegian Tale* and *The Crofton Boys*, — and was delighted with

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Channing felt that he owed his restoration from this illness very much to the faithful care and most kind and disinterested attention of Dr. Miner, of Wilkesbarre.



these most true, living pictures. They have found great favor here. I have read, too, your brother's paper on the Five Points of Calvinism; and, perhaps, nothing from his pen has interested and helped me more. I put it into ——'s hands, who entered fully into my enjoyment of it. I am just reading Dr. Follen's sermons. How rich in great thoughts! They are not as popular in form as I expected, but will do much good."

In the summer, Dr. Channing went to reside at Lenox, Massachusetts, amid the circle of warm-hearted and cultivated friends whose graceful and cordial hospitality crowned with the charm of moral beauty the picturesque scenery of Berkshire. From the interesting journal of Mrs. Charles Sedgwick, the following extracts are selected, as fitly confirming the view which has been presented of his social character, and the sphere of his influence.

"The greatest pleasure and excitement of the summer have consisted in Dr. Channing's residence among us. He came the first of July, and remained nearly two months with us, besides making a little excursion to Bashpish, and spending a week at Stockbridge, so that he did not fairly go away till early in September. I had no personal knowledge of him before, having seen him but twice, and then merely for a few moments. I knew him only through his works; and the opportunity of intercourse with him, which I have been permitted to enjoy, I rank among the greatest pleasures and highest privileges of my existence. His life, from the state of his health, and probably, too, from the natural bent of his mind, was so entirely one of study and contemplation, that few who had lived all their days in the same city either knew him or thought of him in a social capacity. But singularly lofty as is the spirit which his writings breathe, he was true to every word of them in heart and life.

"It might have been truly said, after every fresh interview, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us?' His conversation was of a most elevating, inspiring nature, and there was something in his whole air and manner, in the expression of his eye and the tone of his voice, that gave me the impression of a being who lived altogether 'above the world'; and yet he was so full of human sympathy, of true brotherly love, so very kindly, that this elevation never constituted any barrier between himself and those with whom he associated; on the contrary, for the time being, they felt themselves lifted into a higher, purer, holier atmosphere than that of ordinary life. As I said lately, in a letter to a friend, the man was never lost in the saint, nor the friend in the prophet and seer. Indeed, we never had a friend in close neighborhood,

who showed more interest in everything connected with us, in young and old, in our family and in our school, in our occupations, pleasures, and pursuits of every sort. I imagined he had never before lived where, from the absence of all conventionalisms, he was able to mingle so freely with those about him, and to penetrate so completely into the heart and core of things connected with their social condition. Our hours were never too late, or our assemblies of people too large, to tax his feeble strength, which, in such a place as Boston, unfitted him completely for general society; and our opportunities of free, informal, and kindly intercourse with him brought us so near to him, and on such a footing, that heart answered to heart, as face to face. He took great interest in the children, and never suffered them to pass him without a kiss or kindly greeting. . . .

“Dr. Channing’s countenance, when speaking in public or private, but more especially on religious subjects, was full of inspiration. His look, his manner, the tone of his voice, as well as what he uttered, were all calculated to make our hearts glow. His prayers were like the genuine outpourings of a tender, devoted, loving child, full of reverence and of earnestness, to his father. The whole effect of his services, even when conducted in this simple manner in a private room, was precisely such as I have since heard ascribed to his public services. The very atmosphere about him seemed holy. Our hearts—for the time, at least—were purified and exalted, and we shrank from dispersing, as if, by leaving the spot, we should break some sacred spell. . . .

“The first of August was exceedingly fine,—the air pure and clear. Almost every one looked eager and animated. I shall never forget Dr. Channing’s appearance in the pulpit that day. His countenance was full of spiritual beauty, and when he uttered that beautiful invocation towards the close of his address,—which would not have been more characteristic or fitting, had he known that he should never speak again in public,—he looked like one inspired. I have more than once seen this part of his address referred to, and compared to the death-song of the swan.

“There were two hymns sung that day, written by my sister, Mrs. Susan Sedgwick, and myself. We had some amusement in their preparation. The Doctor had expressed a great wish that there should be lines written for the occasion, and Susan was applied to in his behalf. She sent him a hymn, which, not answering his purpose exactly, he returned, expressing a wish that she would write another, and embody certain sentiments which he specified. She called the first, laughingly, ‘her rejected address’;

and immediately complied with his request. Meanwhile, I had submitted to him the rough draft of mine, which he criticised, suggesting amendments and alterations. I revised and corrected it, accordingly; and he said, jokingly, that we were the most docile authoresses he had ever known. . . .

"Dr. Channing was so exhausted by this effort of speaking, that he did not recover sufficiently to give us any of his society for several days. My mother, who had been spending some weeks here, was about leaving me, and he wished so much to entertain her at his room, that she was invited to take tea there, the day after the address was delivered. He sat in a corner of the sofa, hardly able to speak at all, but pleased to listen. . . .

"One day this summer, while he was sitting in my sister Catherine's parlor, something was said as to which period of life is the happiest. He smiled, and answered, that *he* thought it was about sixty."

How truly this sixty-third summer was his happiest will appear by giving a few extracts from his letters.

"*Lenox, July 1, 1842.* I expect a pleasant summer in this beautiful spot. I have just been walking on the piazza to make acquaintance with my new home, and struck up a friendship with it in a moment. It is a true delight to me to be once more in the midst of trees, fields, and mountains. I took a few drives in Wilkesbarre before leaving it, and caught some glimpses of that famed valley, and feel as if I were not wholly without recompense for what I suffered there. . . . I was less ill than at Newport last autumn. . . . For a fortnight I spent the day in or on the bed, in much passiveness of mind as well as of body, but with no weariness, no pain, no anxiety. That I should have risen so soon surprises me, and shows that the attack was less severe than it seemed at first. . . . I feel the unspeakable benefits of having modes of action, over which place and time and weather have little influence. In my pen, paper, and a few books, I have all the apparatus I need for the great objects of life. This is the happiness of every man who has proposed the discovery and diffusion of great truths as his end, and, in a better age, this happiness will be a general possession."

"*Lenox, July 21, 1842.*<sup>1</sup> I am sorry to learn from your letter that your solicitude about me has continued so long. Ever since I began to improve in health, I have gone on very slowly, to be sure, but steadily, until now I am in my usual condition. Perhaps

<sup>1</sup> To Mrs. E. L. Follen.



I insensibly let down my standard of health, and after every convalescence am satisfied with a little less vigor than I had before. But 'I have all things and abound.' It is not necessary to me 'to *learn* to be content.' I have been imbued with that lesson without effort. Life presents to me, as yet, her more cheering aspects. Is it that my condition has been happier, or my temperament happier, or that I have *resisted* evil less than most people? I have not gone through life fighting with my lot. When evil has come, I have accepted it at once. This looks like insensibility, and yet I am not stone.

"What mysteries we are to ourselves! Here am I finding life a sweeter cup as I approach what are called its dregs, looking round on this fair, glorious creation with a serener love, and finding more to hope for in society at the very time that its evils weigh more on my mind. Undoubtedly the independent happiness which I find in thought and study has much to do with my freedom from the common depression. The man who lives in a world of his own, and who has contrived to make or find a bright one, has struck one mine at least. But enough. This page of egotism is not to my taste, and, what is more, I have not gone to the root of the matter, but have touched only on superficial influences."

"*July 22.* Grand mountain sweeps, precipices, sweet valleys, these absorb us. We do not look beneath the surface, and by a perverseness, very strange to the utilitarian, we sometimes gaze with most interest on spots which promise nothing to the farmer or mineralogist. The universe, as we plainly see, is adapted with the most provident wisdom to the wants and powers of man; and why may we not suppose that the want of the picturesque, the capacity of enjoying the wild and awful, may be provided for as truly as our physical needs, so that a spot quite barren to the owner or the geologist has a noble use in the system?

"We enjoy our life here greatly. The country is inexhaustible in pleasant excursions. After spending so many years on the seashore, I am the more alive to mountain scenery. But you must not think that I am living on fine sights. We write about what we call our pleasures, and are silent about our labors. The last week I returned to my writing, and when I can write I call myself well. I find that I have not forgotten the use of the pen, and hope to do a little good before I take leave of this pleasant earth. We have found the climate hot; in other words, we have found genuine summer here. In Rhode Island, summer looks out now and then, but does not show her full, glowing face."

"*August 7.* In truth, our cup of outward good seems overflow-

ing, and I receive it thankfully, not forgetting how soon it may pass from us. I can enjoy life with a full conviction of its transitoriness. I enter at once into the spirit of mountain scenery, and have even begun to make comparisons between mountains and the ocean. I can better judge after a longer acquaintance with the former. The ocean I have known from birth, and loved more and more."

"It encourages me to see the spirit of inquiry spreading through the country. In truth, every visit to the interior gives me signs of an improving people. I am struck with the effect of agriculture in softening the face of our hard New England. Time wears out the wrinkles on Mother Earth's brow. The world grows younger with age."

"*August 11.* The best gifts of Providence are universal, and the effect of *labor* in giving content and keeping off fits of depression is a striking proof of this encouraging truth. How far you were serious in your speculations about the connection between the geology of a country and the physical and moral qualities of the inhabitants, I do not know; but there are some great facts in favor of the doctrine, and I see not why it may not hold good more extensively than we have supposed. I have lately asked myself, whether light may not be a more important physical agent than it has been considered, whether the various rays may not prevail in different proportions at different times, and whether the preponderance of one ray — say the red or violet — may not exert unsuspected influence on vegetable and animal nature. I feel that we know as yet little, or next to nothing, of the subtle power of nature."

"Our natural affections become more and more beautiful to me. I sometimes feel as if I had known nothing of human life until lately, — but so it will be forever. We shall wake up to the wonderful and beautiful in what we have seen with undiscerning eyes, and find a new creation without moving a step from our old haunts."

"I mix freely with conservatives and with the hopeful, and am more and more inclined to extend my intercourse with men. Everywhere our common nature comes out. I have kept up by books an acquaintance with all classes; but real life is the best book. At the end of life I see that I have lived too much by myself. I wish you more courage, cordiality, and real union with your race. . . . .

"Mr. — spent part of the evening with us. He is a wise, just, noble man, and disposed to look with severe eyes on the cor-

ruption of the times ; but, after a few gentle croaks, we agreed that the republic need not be despaired of. . . .

“Such is our asceticism. I should incline much, if I were in better health, to break every chain, and harden myself for a life of wider experience and more earnest struggle.”

“August 11. Amidst so many social claims, and in this beautiful country, which seems inexhaustible in its attraction, I am not a hard student, and I feel more and more that love is better than thought, or rather that thought is worth little when not steeped in love. My reserve is not to be broken down in these latter years of my life, but I think the ice melts. I am sure age need not be cold and unlovely, and I welcome any degree of improvement.”

Thus serenely, amid beauty and love, glided by the last few months of earthly life. All clouds were lifted, and rainbows spanned them. His sun brightened to its setting. What he had sown in his spring-time with tears, he had reaped with joy in his autumn. And winds of Providence were scattering far his winged words. During the previous season he had written :—

“This morning I plucked a globe of the dandelion, — the seed-vessel, — and was struck as never before with the silent, gentle manner in which Nature sows her seed, and I asked if this is not the way in which the spiritual seed, *truth*, is to be sown. I saw, too, how Nature sows her seed broadcast ; how the gossamer wing of the dandelion-seed scatters it far and wide ; how it falls, as by accident, and sends up the plant where no one suspects. So we must send truth abroad, not forcing it on here and there a mind, not watching its progress anxiously, but trusting that it will light on a kindly soil, and yield its fruit. So Nature teaches.”

And now his own prophetic words were to be verified.

“Amidst such truly Elysian beauty, the chains which the spirit wears are broken, and it goes forth to blend with and to enjoy the universe. How ungrateful appear all selfish states of feeling, when in these blessed hours of liberty we diffuse ourselves through the glorious creation, sympathize with its order and happiness, and rise with joyful trust to its Divine Author ! Is there not a day of release at hand ? and may we not use such privileged seasons as foretastes of the joy which awaits us, if we bear patiently and do cheerfully the will of the Great Disposer ?”

Early in September, Dr. Channing left Lenox, with the intention of returning to Boston through the romantic passes of the Green Mountains, but was detained at Bennington by an attack of fever,



which, slight at first, steadily increased, until the appearance of typhoid symptoms induced his physicians to summon his brother from Boston. His immediate family and several near relatives were gathered around him by this alarming intelligence, and every effort was used to stay the insidious disease. But in vain. Through twenty-six days he slowly sank, though illusive changes excited hopes. From a desire to avoid occasions of excitement, the friends who watched by his bedside abstained from continued conversations; and his own consciousness of the intense action of his brain, and his wish to use every means of recovery, made him seek the most soothing influences. "Can you aid me to call off my mind," he several times said, "to common things, from these crowds of images, these visions of immensity, and rushing thoughts?" A few extracts from the journal of one of the small band whose sad privilege it was to minister to him will show how characteristic, to the last, was each word and act.

"On my return from church, he expressed pleasure that I had been there, inquired earnestly as to the appearance of interest in the congregation, and talked with animation of missionary enterprises as signs of the deepening feeling of human brotherhood. 'Is there any influence in the world,' he said, looking up in my face with kindling expression, 'like the Christian religion, any power which so *insures* the progress of mankind and the widest diffusion of good?' . . . .

"As these plans for carrying out his cherished convictions were described, he at once, with his usual discrimination, stated the dangers and difficulties in the way, ending with these words: 'I feel more deeply every day the close personal relations which the Heavenly Father sustains to every spirit, and the strong bond of a common spiritual nature between all human beings. But we must beware of over-excited feeling, or vague sentiment, of mingling our theoretical views or our favorite imaginations with the truth. We need to feel the *reality*,' — with great emphasis and expressiveness, — 'the *REALITY* of a spiritual life. In the common affections, in the usual relations, in seeming trifles, in the contingencies and events of hourly existence, we must learn to see a present Providence, an all-inspiring Goodness.' Finding himself much moved, he waved his hand, saying, 'But I have talked enough.'

"He liked to hear the minutest details about friends, asked constantly after his relatives and acquaintances, and was much pleased with sketches of character. I told him of the —s, of their beautiful home affections, their Quaker-like simplicity of life, their sacrifices for Antislavery, the blended courage and peace with which they

had met their trials. A beautiful smile spread over his face as he listened, — his eyes full on mine. ‘*Do* such people grow among us?’ he exclaimed, when I had finished. ‘This is indeed refreshing. Tell me! have you met many such spirits?’ On answering, ‘They are not a few,’ he replied, ‘The earth, then, is very rich!’ On describing another lovely family, he remarked, ‘Yes! such life is very beautiful. But they do not seem to have a readiness to sacrifice all for the great ends and the good of man, like the —s.’ I told him of —, who left a good situation, with ample support, because he would not, even by *silence*, seem to compromise the truth, and who, sick and weak, far advanced in life, separated by poverty from his children, and even for a time from his wife, whom he most tenderly loved, yet struggled on patiently, cheerfully, till he had paid debts incurred by failure years before, although he had received the benefit of the English bankrupt act. He looked up with the words, ‘This is a hero, a *Christian hero*.’ Again, I told him of —, who, dying the horrible death of cancer in the face, though naturally a stern man, grew gentler, more thoughtful, prayerful, bright, and loving, each day. ‘Ah!’ said he, ‘this shows us a little of the meaning of sorrow and pain. How grand is the power of the spirit!’ When reading to him, he would say, ‘You may pass that; let me hear of men, of people, of their social relations.’ . . .

“The courtesy with which he every morning greeted the young woman who arranged his room, and his kind inquiries after all members of the household, were unvarying. As the physician left him one morning, he remarked, ‘A good face that, and a most kind man!’ He spoke with commendation of the great quiet of the hotel, and of the readiness to oblige exhibited by Mr. Hicks’s family. He seemed deeply moved by the considerate stillness of the officers and soldiers of a military company, which had held a review on the green before the house, and dined in a neighboring room. To his attendants and watchers his thoughtful gratitude was incessant. Whenever we smoothed his bed or pillows, he would say, ‘You are really most admirable bed-makers. All is as well as could possibly be desired.’ His chief anxiety seemed to be lest we should be strained by lifting him, wearied with watching, or injured by confinement; and he constantly urged us to seek recreation, and to take the fresh air. His apparent indifference to outward conditions was most characteristic. Whenever we attempted to make him easier, he would say, ‘O, it is of no importance, — of the least possible moment! Thank you.’

“I observed continually, that his mind seemed to be very active in sleep. Words escaped from his lips, though they were seldom

distinct. But in every instance where their meaning was caught, he appeared to be engaged in acts of prayer. 'Heavenly Father' was most often intelligible. His very earnestness sometimes wakened him. Once, on thus rousing, he said, 'I have had a singularly vivid dream of being engaged in prayer for —, by which he seemed to be very deeply affected.' And after a short slumber at the close of a restless night, his first words were, 'I have had a most genial nap, and I do not know that my heart was ever so overflowed by a grateful sense of the goodness of God.' It was most characteristic, that a man, who through life had such an aversion to anything like parade of religious feeling, should thus unconsciously exhibit his all-pervading piety. Thursday night he passed in a wholly wakeful state. In the morning he told me that his mind had been very active, that he had allowed it to work freely, and had enjoyed greatly his thoughts. . . .

"On Friday, September 30, he said to Dr. Swift: 'I think myself less well. Week has passed after week, and, instead of improving, I seem to myself declining. I should wish, if it is the will of Providence, to be able to return home,' — adding, after a moment, — '*to die there.*' His voice was even and firm as he spoke, and the habitual tranquillity of his manner undisturbed. He instantly added, 'But it will all be well; it *is* all well.' This was the only time that he distinctly referred to his death; though he undoubtedly felt that his recovery was hopeless, he was probably unprepared, as we all were, for the very rapid change. During this day he visibly sank, and could only with the greatest exertion move at all. The effort to take nourishment distressed him. Yet, when requested to receive something, he would whisper, 'O, yes! I will take it. I desire to be true to all the relations of duty.' Once, however, he replied, with a word of endearment, 'I wish now to remain for a *long time* without taking anything. I wish to be *quiet.*' . . .

"On Sunday, October 2d, as he heard the bells ring, he said to us, 'Now go to church.' 'It is a part of true religion, dear sir, to nurse the sick and aid our friends.' 'True,' he replied; 'you may stay.' He asked us to read to him from the New Testament. 'From what part?' 'From the Sermon on the Mount.' As we closed the Lord's Prayer, he looked up, with a most expressive smile, and said, 'That will do now; I find that I am too much fatigued to hear more. I take comfort, *O, the greatest comfort*, from these words. They are full of the divinest spirit of our religion.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Note B, at the end of the volume.



"In the afternoon he spoke very earnestly, but in a hollow whisper. I bent forward; but the only words I could distinctly hear were, 'I have received many messages from the spirit.'

"As the day declined, his countenance fell, and he grew fainter and fainter. With our aid, he turned himself towards the window, which looked over valleys and wooded summits to the east. We drew back the curtains, and the light glorified his face. The sun had just set, and the clouds and sky were bright with gold and crimson. He breathed more and more gently, and, without a struggle or a sigh, the spirit passed.

"Amidst the splendor of autumn, at an hour hallowed by his devout associations, on the day consecrated to the memory of the risen Christ, and looking eastward, as if in the setting sun's reflected light he saw promise of a brighter morning, he was taken home."

The body was immediately conveyed by the family to Boston, — the Western Railroad Company, through Josiah Quincy, Jr., Esq., with most delicate and thoughtful kindness, offering them the free use of a car.

On the afternoon of Friday, October 7th, the funeral services were observed at the Federal Street meeting-house, in compliance with the wish of the Society, as thus expressed: —

"At a meeting of the Proprietors of the Meeting-house in Federal Street, in the city of Boston, the following Resolutions were offered by HON. JUDGE DAVIS, and unanimously adopted.

"*Resolved*, That we have heard with profound grief the intelligence of the death of our revered and beloved pastor and friend, the REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D., with whom we have been so long and so happily connected, and whose invaluable moral and religious teachings we have so long enjoyed.

"*Resolved*, That we dwell with deep sensibility upon the life and services of this faithful servant of God, now brought to a close on earth; upon the energy, unbroken to the last, with which, notwithstanding much physical infirmity, he labored in the discharge of the trust assigned to him by his great Taskmaster in Heaven; upon his loyalty to duty, his sympathy with humanity, his religious faith, the eminent Christian graces which adorned his character, and the persuasive power with which he preached the gospel of Christ: and we feel a profound sense of gratitude for the peculiar privileges which we have so long had, in hearing his voice, receiving his instructions, and in being guided, warmed, and animated by his discourses and his life.

“*Resolved*, That, as members of this community, we mourn the vanishing from earth of a great moral and intellectual light, in the death of one who has uniformly devoted great powers to good ends, whose bosom glowed with love for the whole human family, who has been the eloquent and fearless advocate of truth, liberty, and humanity, whose admirable writings have had no other object than the highest good of mankind, who has done so much to make men wiser, happier, and better, and who has commended the religion of Christ to so many hearts and minds, by his profound and beautiful expositions of its doctrines and spirit.

“*Resolved*, That we deeply sympathize with the family of our departed friend in their irreparable loss, and earnestly pray that the consolations of that religion, of which he was so faithful a minister, may be extended to them in proportion to the magnitude of their bereavement.

“*Resolved*, That the Standing Committee of the Proprietors, the Deacons of the Church, and the Clerk and Treasurer, be a committee to make arrangements for a public funeral and appropriate services in the church, provided it be agreeable to the family of the deceased.

“*Resolved*, That Hon. Judge Davis, Mr. Rollins, and the Clerk be a committee to present a copy of the foregoing resolutions to the family of the late Dr. Channing, and that the Clerk also transmit a copy to Rev. Mr. Gannett.

“A true copy.

“Attest, GEO. S. HILLARD, *Proprietors' Clerk*.

“BOSTON, October 5, 1842.”

The discourse was by Mr. Gannett, whose “words of simple truth” were the eulogy best befitting the place and occasion. At the close of the services, the vast assembly, by a spontaneous impulse, passed slowly up the middle aisle, to gaze for the last time upon the countenance, now calmly turned upward to the pulpit, whence its light of love had for so many years shone down. Across the waxen brow the dark brown locks lay softly as in life; and he looked so like one entranced in a dream of glory, that the hand was slow to close the coffin-lid above a fleshly temple, whose portal the spirit still seemed to brighten with its train.<sup>1</sup>

As the procession moved from the church, the bell of the Catholic cathedral was tolled; and it was grateful, at such a moment, to remember the just and cordial words in which Dr. Channing had offered his tribute of honor to the devoted Cheverus.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Note C, at the end of the volume.

<sup>2</sup> Works, Vol. I. pp. 178, 179. One Voiume Edition, p. 563.

At twilight, among the shades of Mount Auburn, the hands of relatives bore the bier, deposited the coffin, and covered with earth the remains of Channing.

A monument of fine white marble, designed by Washington Allston, and erected by the Federal Street congregation, marks his burial-place. It bears the following inscriptions, prepared by Mr. George Ticknor:—

*On one side of the Monument.*

Here rest the remains of  
 WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING,  
 BORN, 7 APRIL, 1780,  
 AT NEWPORT, R. I.;  
 ORDAINED, 1 JUNE, 1803,  
 AS A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST  
 TO THE SOCIETY WORSHIPPING GOD  
 IN FEDERAL STREET, BOSTON:  
 DIED, 2 OCTOBER, 1842,  
 WHILE ON A JOURNEY,  
 AT BENNINGTON, VERMONT.

*On the other side.*

In Memory of  
 WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING,  
 HONORED THROUGHOUT CHRISTENDOM,  
 FOR HIS ELOQUENCE AND COURAGE  
 IN MAINTAINING AND ADVANCING  
 THE GREAT CAUSE OF  
 TRUTH, RELIGION, AND HUMAN FREEDOM,  
 THIS MONUMENT  
 IS GRATEFULLY AND REVERENTLY ERECTED  
 BY THE CHRISTIAN SOCIETY,  
 OF WHICH, DURING NEARLY FORTY YEARS,  
 HE WAS PASTOR.



## NOTES.

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### NOTE A. — (See Page 665.)

It is the tradition, that the rocks near the beach at Newport, which Dr. Channing was so fond of visiting, were much frequented by Bishop Berkeley, and that some of his works were there composed.

### NOTE B. — (See Page 697.)

I FEEL as if it were insulting the memory of my uncle to refer, even, to the assertion, that on his death-bed he changed his opinions. But the urgency of many correspondents induces me here to say, once for all, that there was *no foundation whatever* for such a rumor. Weakness, the violence of fever, and the earnest desire for his restoration, prevented conversation on his part and ours. But every word, act, look, showed us how perfect was his peace. Every word that he is known to have spoken, indicating his own religious opinions and feelings, is recorded on the preceding pages. This distinct statement should forever put an end to the calumny referred to, among all honest men.

W. H. C.

### NOTE C. — (See Page 699.)

THIS Life would be incomplete without referring to the portraits and engravings of Dr. Channing now in existence. Great injustice has been done him in most of these representations. "The romantic and tender beauty" of his expression, as well as the power of thought in his countenance, has never been adequately given in any portrait; and most of the engravings must be pronounced caricatures.

The engraving in the first volume of the "Memoir," published in Boston in 1848, is from an unfinished picture by Allston, in possession of his son, painted in 1811. The picture is full of ideal beauty, purity, devoutness, and youthful fervor, and much of this expression is preserved in the engraving. It is considered a very correct likeness by those who can look back to that period of Dr. Channing's life.

The Albertype in this book is a photographic reproduction of a picture by S. Gambardella, painted in 1839, now in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Mary C. Eustis. This picture is the one by which Dr. Channing, as he appeared in later years, will be chiefly known. Seen under unfavorable lights, there is a harshness and look of abstraction in this picture which are not agreeable; but in a mellow light, it preserves many characteristics of the original not elsewhere to be found.

At least two copies of this picture have been made by Gambardella, but both very inferior to the original likeness. One of them belonged to the late Hon. T. H. Perkins, of Boston. The other was sent to Glasgow, and engraved for the edition of Dr. Channing's Works published by Hedderwick & Co. But the engraving is equally devoid of likeness and of elevated expression.

There is a likeness by Gilbert Stuart, in possession of the family, taken in middle life, which is very wanting in refined expression. It can never be regarded as in any sense a portrait of Dr. Channing, save to those who, from familiarity, have learned to trace out some resemblances through its defects.

The picture by Chester Harding is, perhaps, better known than any other, as it has been copied, and also engraved, by Hoogland. But no just views of the original can be obtained from this picture, or from the engraving.

A very unfinished picture, — a profile by George Flagg, — formerly in possession of the late Rev. Dr. Parkman, of Boston, gives a general image of the original.

There is also a picture by Ingham, in possession of the family, painted from a sketch after death, and from memory, in 1843, which, though incorrect in some of the features and deficient in strength, recalls to those familiar with the original the sweetness and deep sentiment of his expression. Strangers, however, would never receive from it a just impression of Dr. Channing.

A pencil sketch by Malbone, taken in early youth, presents a very pleasing contrast, by its air of full health and vigorous youthfulness, with those taken at a later period.

The bust of Persico, though tame and weak in character, is, in some respects, of value. The profile view is especially to be commended. The forehead is wanting in breadth and fulness. But, as a whole, this bust should rank next to the Gambardella picture.

No daguerreotype or photograph of Dr. Channing was ever taken from life.

Dr. Channing thus writes to his son of the various attempts to represent him : —

"*November 20, 1835.* I gave Mr. Persico no encouragement to make an experiment on my head. It is too thin, and has too little beauty for this art. Painting, I think, can take greater liberties than sculpture, and even painting has made poor work with my face. I am certainly not vain of my exterior. My countenance would not make me many friends, I fear. What has troubled me in my different portraits is, not that they have not given me a more intellectual expression, but that so little benevolence has beamed from the features. I have learned, with the Apostle, to prefer charity to all knowledge ; and, if I am to be handed down to posterity, I should be pleased to speak from the stone or canvas, or rather to breathe from it, good-will to mankind."

"*August 3, 1836.* I am sitting for my likeness, — a wearisome task ; but I was willing, as so many poor likenesses had been made, to try once more for a good one."

1838. "Mr. Gambardella has succeeded in his work. My friends are entirely satisfied with the picture. It is not only a good likeness, but a meritorious work of art. After so many unsuccessful attempts, this poor face is faithfully transferred to canvas, and, on the whole, is better worth looking at than I supposed."

W. F. C.

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